

de-program for the 1st meeting of the OFICINA EXPERIMENTAL in guincho:

DESTRUCTION OF A WORK BY NORONHA DA COSTA BY SHOOTING AT IT,
aquatic immersion, filming and other pleasant
games

rinchoa (CHALET OF HYDRANGEAS):

EXPERIMENTAL picnic

selection of a symbol for and

un-definition of this crypto group

program for the production of multiples

program for an edition of flyers

first projects for involvements, events, facts, acts,

readings and bewilderments, theatre, cinema and

FEASTS

project for a trip to Porto

keep the CHALET in good condition

filming

visit to future (?) accommodations in Rio Mouro

FINAL GOODBYE

with sadness

NB this handout is ALREADY one of the pages of the upcoming publications
if you loose it you will have one page less

Saturday, April 12 1969

Program for "Encontro do Guincho" (Guincho meeting), Ernesto de Sousa, 1969.
Meeting organized by Ernesto the Sousa in collaboration with Noronha da
Costa and Oficina Experimental. The program of the meeting included the
transportation of an object by Noronha da Costa to Guincho beach, its
destruction by shooting and the registration of these actions for a film by
the same artist (see pages 8-9). Afterwards there was also a meeting and
discussion at Ernesto de Sousa and Isabel Alves' house in Rinchoa (see pages
10-11). Participants were Ana Hatherly, António Pedro Vasconcelos, Artur Rosa,
Carlos Calet (film recording), Clotilde Rosa, E.M. de Melo e Castro, Fernando
Pernes, Helena Almeida, Jorge Peixhino, Manuel Baptista, Noronha da Costa and
Oficina Experimental (Carlos Gentil-Homem, Joaquim Barata, Manuel Torres - film
recording; João Luis Gomes - destruction of the object; Isabel Alves, Filomena
Fernandes, Francisco Bronze, Lya Freire and Maria Manuel Torres).



Guincho meeting, 3/4 1969
Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa



Experimental picnic in Rinchoa, 3/4 1969
Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa

Lisbon, April 21st [1982]

My dear Noronha de Costa,

So, what's the problem?

The "events" in Guincho-Rinchoa in 1969?

For some years now, I call them simply the "Guincho Meetings", just to be clear and to eliminate the ambiguity of the word *happening* and to appraise it as a collective event: the Guincho "ritual" (which I merely organized following your indication), and the conversations that followed in Rinchoa.

With regards to "your indications", the plans that you developed after we discussed the idea for a long time will be available for you to reproduce as soon as I find them. I shall tell you later why in my opinion these plans are precious* (*from the point of view of our history). I was very pleased to hear about the importance you attribute to them. At first I thought you did not care about them. It made me sad. Now that you tell me about the book that Benard is going to publish about you, I am happy to hear that it's written: of course you will say what is most important to you – and we will all gain from hearing about your point of view. Due to lack of time, I did not show you the slides with which I organized a small presentation of your "discoveries" during conferences in Cologne and Geneva etc. (by the way, also referring to the Guincho "ritual"): the moment will come. At the first opportunity I will also show you the results from my analysis of the concept of *happening*. 1969 is an important year for this theoretical-practical study, because it was in 1966 that I received the famous diagram from Maciunas. Ken Friedman from the Californian Fluxus group sent it to me. However, only a few years later, I received the complete re-edition of the Fluxus newspaper *cc V TRE*, which carries a transcription of the polemic radio conversation between Allan Kaprow and George Brecht featuring their dispute on theories and practicalities of the *happening/event*. Finally, today the notion of *performance* eliminates many of the previous theoretical failures and I think that what we did in the past, the experimental poets, João Vieira, me and Jorge Peixinho, with you, etc. – would have been better classified as *performances*...

This is only important because *performance* (from the old French: *per formare*), the performativity, is an inherent concept in science and in the so-called postmodern aesthetics. And so on. The "Guincho Meeting" is important because it has happened. The exact history of the facts remains to be written ... but it is always "another" history. Personally, and between us, I am not very interested in writing a *curriculum*, and never had the patience – and I don't know if I will ever have – to do it. Moving forward is more fun.

"There is no misunderstanding between me and the others" – Mestre Almada said – "what I need is for me to understand them".

When do we get to see each other? Sending you a hug also from Isabel, and another one to your folks

from Ernesto de Sousa

Text published in *Noronha da Costa*, Lisbon, INCM, 1982

Translation: Tobi Maier

(12)

FROM THE VOID TO PROVOCATION ERNESTO DE SOUSA

The idols fall from the altar. One by one.

Man becomes approximate, irremediably finite.

Mortal. The "exercise of the infinite" no longer imprints anything on the "blocks of knowledge". No love, no murder more truly pure...

All we have left is the void.

The "horror of the vacuum" of the Middle Ages. All we have left is **that** horror. The horror.

Calhau "sits at his easel" and paints the horror. He is a naturalist painter, a verist, a realist. Only that he no longer paints that poetic corner by the riverside, the weir, the sunset, and the "pure and authentic" peasant woman with her headscarf of gaudy floral patterns.

He paints what he sees and – as Tzara also warned – everything he sees is false.

But what the poet (the painter, the filmmaker, the novelist or something more or less like that) sees **cannot** be false. That is why he only sees the void.

(Sitting at the next table is Abel Manta.

How we all love him! He even saw the Chiado!!!)

And so I brought this precious unanimity together while copious tears flowed from my eyes like baroque fountains: painters of the void. Unanimous in that regard, they who are noisily diverse and not only in their intentions: Nery, Nuno Siqueira, Calhau. Together neither sentences nor words letters perhaps in a clear and severe demonstration:... to those who have shall be given and they shall have in abundance; but to those who have not, even what they have shall be taken from them.

(That is why I talk to them in parables: because while seeing they do not see...) But the void here is courage. Or it can be. For you, who knows how to read the end in all the violence or even sweet (or erotic) cruelty. In other words, and now I speak with scientific rigour: in need.

Parenthesis. (I don't signal to the reader that I understand him it would be too easy.) I am referring to Calhau, once again.

Because he is the youngest, or the purest.

As this after all sounds like a signal: perhaps I wanted to say nothing more or less but exactly the opposite. Calhau perhaps doesn't know he is a hero. Reader despite everything my responsibility is great I am here as a member of AICA not even needing to put the dots on the once starched collars. That is why I warn you: we all already know that Ionesco's delightfully reactionary story of philology leading to crime.

Crime? Don't make me laugh, Moe would already be saying. The important thing at this point of the river – advertent by target ha! ha! There goes the word language is knowing that e.g. hero and anti-hero mean exactly the same thing.

They also mean nothing.

(13)

If however you think about the profound gravity-sound of the words:

NOTHING-VOID-GOD...

And so on.

You ask me. Are you an atheist? And I answer: Go to hell!

So, and with all due reservation, Calhau is a hero. Moreover there have only ever been heroes like that, more or less unaware. Or did you think that Prometheus wrote great books about aesthetics and morality? Well, he is a hero, but, let's make concessions grammatically, habitually, informatively: a hero of what? And there lies a question that does not confuse us:

HERO OF POVERTY

I know, a poor **attitude**, so that it may be the precise attitude of a minimum of riches. (Elementary truth like bread give us today our daily bread and there it is because my eyes are baroque like all the fountains: there are those who only have this ideal our (their) daily bread.)

Hence **attitude**, only that of António Sena, who lives in London. (I have always wondered why António Sena lives in London plus all those millions, plus Susy, etc., why do they live in London and I don't? Certainly the simplest thing is to think it is a need. I have to be here to understand and signal the need for António Sena to be in London and to make that heartrending poor art – in London, of course! Because here it would even make people want to laugh you know why.)

Heartrending. I look at an engraving by António Sena and now indeed my eyes like baroque fountains weep copiously. They wept. Because now there is not even at least that water of talent which came along canals and lakes of pleasure and was they said crystal clear. So far, piped water is not crystal clear nor copious weeping. Only a business on a planetary scale. Plus ecology and the rest. For the time being, I said, don't think I am a pessimist.

On the contrary, my vocation is for Paradise Lost. You can call it what you want. Continuity, joy, revolution, **your body**, totality... A temple, peace. You don't need much, all you need is everything.

Like Learning,

to Live

to Live with

because the arm has become separated from the trunk, the hand from the waist where it was canonically supported (this is called caress in terms of eroticism and the truth is that I even cross the street erotically) the finger from what it was pointing at it is as if there were not even signs any more

so let us BEGIN

shall we BEGIN? (Yes, exactly for you Almada Negreiros "like the whole path from beginning to end" let us begin with what we have)

With this PRO VOCATION

provocation like poverty makes no sense without reference

the environments of Ana Vieira of the ANA

of Helena (Almeida) the allegories (That's why I talk to them in parables...)

the walls and forests of Alberto Carneiro

the sheets of Lourdes Castro

the letters of João Vieira

are not provocations

they are PRO VOCATIONS

like the empty poster of Carlos Gentil-Homem

empty as a pro vocation

empty for this obstinate wish

to see

to SEE

at last

beyond meditation very useful and truly stony from the fountains where there no longer flows water

pure

this is clever and fresh like at the start

origin

LIKE THIS ALL IS A SIGN OF THE BEGINNING of paradise lost (the void) it is humus (my Raul Brandão)

of the BEGINNING (my Almada Negreiros)

beginning with your body

even asleep

or far

PS AND CATALOGUE

for this exhibition we did not choose the **best** or the **more** or the **less** nor did we seek the collaboration of all the artists that we most admire now and here we did not choose this perspective because it was considered exclusive nor because it was necessary to set the clock

it is just an idea a proposal of understanding and action that other perspectives will perhaps

make more lucid and necessary

the artists requested to collaborate

are not **represented** here

Nery has already resolved the void that had been the coherent result of a hyper-constructivism now he has set off perhaps to a neo-romanticism that Pernes will demonstrate

the sheets of Lourdes Castro are just an echo of a problematic of absence (the empty void of absence) that would require a long study.

of Helena Almeida there are two presences that mark different moments of another highly coherent path but what she has done so far that is most unique and rigorous is not shown: the drawings of Nuno Siqueira of Alberto Carneiro and Ana Vieira the full understanding can only be reached with the knowledge of an earlier work that confers meaning and authenticity on the current works and **attitudes**

the same for João Vieira the very ancient choice of a theme that disputes

(letter against reading reading itself)

didn't in any way reduce the semantics of its unique working on one narrow track on the contrary

of António Sena we know little except how difficult and fragile is this obstinacy about rigour fragility that increases his merits his virtues it is the same **obstinate rigour** that we foresee for the young Calhau whose beginnings constitute such elegant resistance to the solicitations of consumer society

as to Carlos Gentil-Homem my working brother his presence in this selection signals the beginnings all the beginnings with their perplexities and an optimism that explains the simple and direct understanding of Almada: WE ARE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IN THE TIME THAT DOES NOT DIE

the artists, or perhaps better, the aesthetic operators are not represented here they did not conjure up a way to offer a poetics already manifested nor were they asked for any complicity

but if this encounter was possible and if a meaning was uncovered we would have advanced a little to a conviviality finally possible.

Text published in the catalogue of Expo AICA 72, Sociedade Nacional de Belas Artes, July and August 1972, where Ernesto de Sousa organized the exhibition "Do Vazio à Pró Vocação", including the following artists: Alberto Carneiro, Ana Vieira, António Sena, Carlos Gentil-Homem, Eduardo Nery, Fernando Calhau, Helena Almeida, João Vieira, Lourdes Castro, Nuno de Siqueira.

Translation: John Elliot



Detail of João Vieira's 'letters', 1971
Works by João Vieira (in the foreground) and Helena Almeida (in the background). Expo AICA 1972



Works by João Vieira (in the foreground), Helena Almeida and Lourdes Castro (in the background)
Wall journal by Alberto Carneiro
Posters by Carlos Gentil-Homem



Environment by Ana Vieira
Environment by Ana Vieira (in the foreground) and paintings by Fernando Calhau (in the background)
Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa

Dear friend,

Lisbon, May 25, 1973

Expo AICA–SNBA will be held once again in January 1974

The section that I will coordinate has the following title, and theme:

PROJECTS–IDEAS

I would like to ask you to take part in this project. Let me begin by explaining what this doesn't involve.

Firstly, this isn't a question of defining any *a priori* aesthetic option: as you will see, amongst the aesthetic operators invited to take part in this project several people have already dedicated themselves to presenting projects at a *work-level* (e.g. René Bertholo, Costa Pinheiro, Alberto Carneiro); whereas others have not.

It is not therefore a question of copying some of the international events that have had a similar title...

... the project mainly and simply involves drawing general attention and the attention of aesthetic operators in particular towards the creative process. This is a question of objectively valuing the artistic project vis-à-vis the art *object*. Finally, the project will be a zone of enlightenment, discussion and conviviality.

In order to achieve the latter objective, in addition to the result that is expected to be attained with the theme of the exhibition itself, we will try ensure that the persons responsible for the project remain throughout the time period of AICA Expo.

This Section will consist of the following zones: an area for displaying those elements which are still of an exhibition nature; a documentation area (tables with books and other elements); a projection area (for films, slides, etc.) and a socializing space.

In fact, by asking you to participate in this Section, with any *project* or *idea* that fall within the aforementioned characteristics (this may even be a simple idea scrawled on a piece of paper), we would like you to attach all the visual or sound documentation you have in your possession; in particular photographs, slides, films, layout plans, graphics, etc.

If you still have any doubts after reading this explanation, please consider the following requirements, which are in no way exclusive:

Send a project developed in the past which, for any reason, has not been implemented and / or a any project, which you consider to be impossible to achieve due to its nature.

An interdisciplinary work. By virtue of the names of the aesthetic operators invited to take part, as listed below, you will see that we do not aim to restrict the aesthetic process to its visual or plastic components. In our opinion, at least in terms of process, such a reduction is unacceptable. But there also doesn't have to be a general consensus about this aesthetic consideration.

The aesthetic operators who have been invited to take part are: Costa Pinheiro, René Bertholo, José Rodrigues, Alberto Carneiro, Armando Alves, Ângelo, Júlio Bragança, Álvaro Lapa, João Vieira, Carlos Gentilhomem, Calhau, Nuno Siqueira, Artur Rosa, Eduardo Nery, Jorge Nesbitt, Ferraz, Helena Almeida, Ana Vieira, Peixinho, Melo e Castro, Ribeiro Telles, Ana Hatherly, Salette Tavares, João Guedes, António Campos, Carlos Calvet, Areal, Dixo and myself.

N.B. : The general form and organisation of this Section may be modified during the exhibition. A programme of projections and discussions is planned, without prejudice to anything that may occur spontaneously.

Ernesto de Sousa

"Projectos-Ideias", exhibition curated by Ernesto de Sousa
as part of Expo AICA 74, SNBA, January–February 1974

Translation: Martin Dale



Works by João Vieira (top and center) and E.M. de Melo e Castro (bottom)
"Projectos-Ideias", Expo AICA 74



Projekt Art by Costa Pinheiro
 Project by Eduardo Nery
 General view of the exhibition
 Isabel Alves collection/ Estate of Ernesto de Sousa

ALTERNATIVA ZERO
 c/o Ernesto de Sousa. GALERIA
 NACIONAL DE ARTE MODERNA. AVE
 NIDA BRASÍLIA (BELÉM). LISBOA
 PORTUGAL TEL. 615931

Sous la direction de Ernesto de Sousa, une ~~exposition~~ ^{Exv. - Hais} exposition d'avant-garde aura lieu, en ~~1977~~ 1977, à la Galerie National d'Art Moderne de Lisbonne, sous la désignation ALTERNATIVE ZERO.

Dans cette exposition participe une très large variété d'opérateurs esthétiques, peintres et sculpteurs, designers, musiciens, cinéastes, experts en culinaire et en jeux d'enfants, photographes, poètes, auteurs d'enveloppements et de happenings.

L'exposition, qui restera ouverte pendant près d'un mois, sera programmée journalièrement et comprendra plusieurs événements, tels que concerts, où les exécutants seront le public lui-même, expanded cinema, rituels, dîners collectifs, jeux variés, etc.

L'intention de cette exposition est d'évaluer les différents essais expérimentalistes survenus au cours de ces dernières années pouvant créer, d'une façon ou d'une autre, des conditions pour l'établissement d'un dialogue nouveau entre les auteurs et les participants et, en même temps, de combattre la passivité des spectateurs ou des visiteurs; dans certains cas, le public sera l'auteur réel.

La Galerie d'Art Moderne deviendra ainsi, selon l'intention des organisateurs, un espace où on se retrouvera ensemble. On veut de cette façon atteindre un but jusqu'à présent paradoxalement impossible: la rencontre et la connaissance mutuelles, la recherche d'un accord.

Dans ce domaine, les artistes portugais résidant à l'étranger seront étudiés séparément. Leur travail et leurs doutes nous intéressent fraternellement.

Donc, cette exposition aura deux buts pratiques et immédiats:

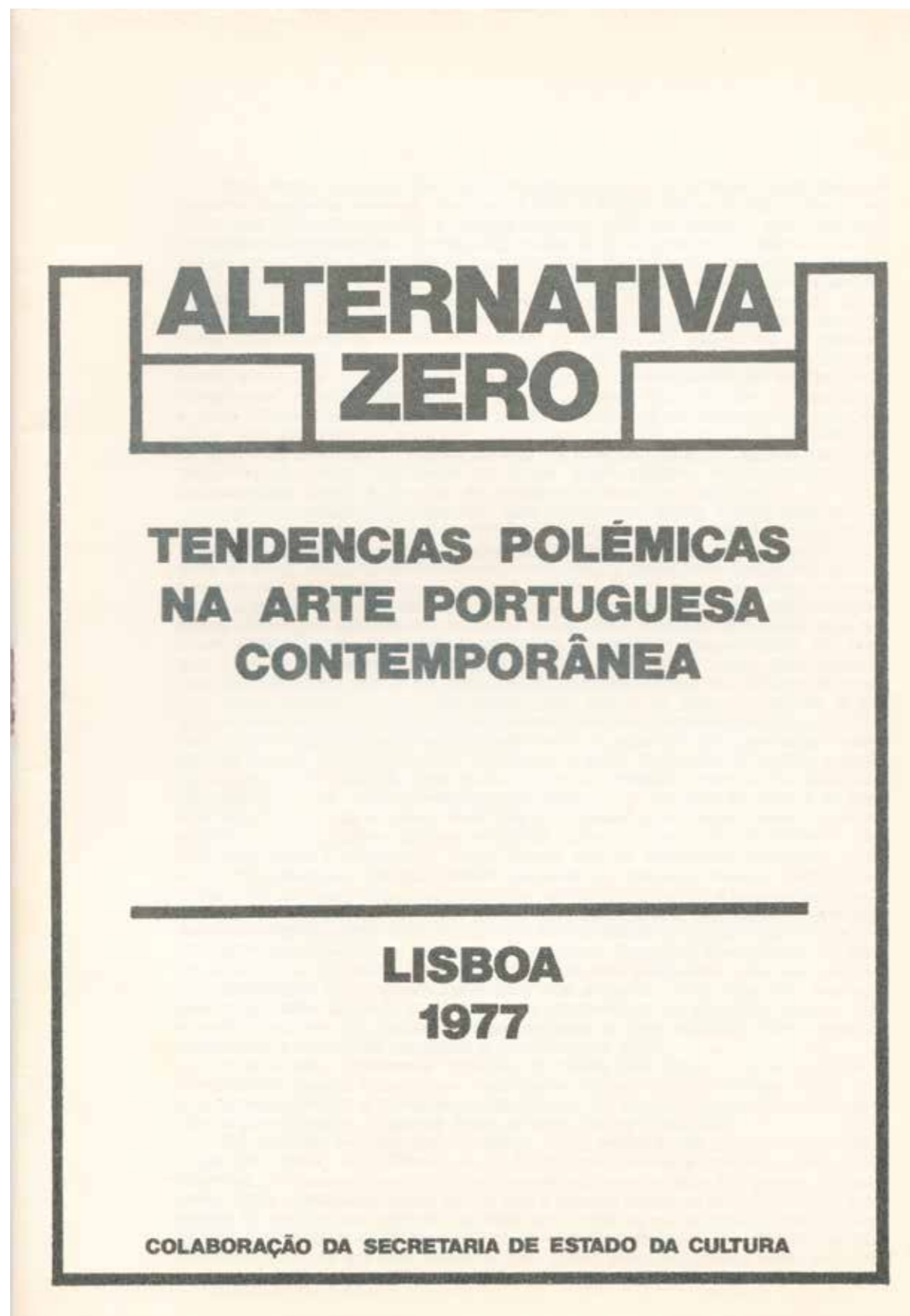
- a) créer un groupe de travail pour des organisations et des études futures;
- b) organiser des ALTERNATIVES à niveau international, dans les années à venir.

Les ALTERNATIVES UN, DEUX, etc., suivront un procès de thématique et d'investigation et non pas une recherche absolue de valeurs et tâcheront d'arriver à un entendement universel des problèmes de communication actuels - et, surtout, de la communication visuelle.

Ernesto de Sousa

All Your Mail And
 Documentatio
 Will Be Exhibited A

ALTERNATIVA ZERO



Cover of the catalogue of *Alternativa Zero*, 1977

[INTRODUCTION TO ALTERNATIVA ZERO: POLEMICAL TENDEN- CIES IN PORTUGUESE CONTEMPORARY ART] ERNESTO DE SOUSA

You've guessed that the most extreme openness belongs to the language of feast...

Paul Ricœur

Every spectator is a coward and a traitor

Franz Fanon

The "Salon". The permanence of French terms says a lot about a certain European modus operandi in the field of Portuguese culture; "vernissages" and related types of events were received in different ways but were always attended, perhaps because there has always been a public that constitutes a "scene": a more or less auto-sufficient social micro-class with its own conservative dogmas as well as its avant-gardes. As a writer put it picturesquely in the 1940s, in Portugal "we are three hundred people pretending to be sophisticated". However, the "others" would not be side-lined completely, because in the art world they could reach a distanced and yet prestigious acknowledgement, almost a substitute for courtly stories, enjoyed with more or less authenticity. In fact, aside from the persistent yet ridiculous Portuguese Frenchism, this phenomenon is not merely national, and can be described as an extension of modern society's evolution where culture disconnects from the grand dying myths aiming for the adventure of autonomy, distressed because it is in effect incompatible. (See also Almada Negreiros: "Nós não estamos algures"). Let's say then that the hypostasis of the "salon" as a symbol (and the museum, in general, another one), can be lived by common people in many ways, reaching from the pride of the owner – ranging from the Spanish grotesque to the false illusion of possession – a kitsch style that affects chiefly the middle class.

But let's return to the "Salon". How does it continue to be experienced in Portugal? Like in other fields, with a desire to compete with the advanced socio-cultural organisms (without the slightest critical awareness), the rich countries and their fragile prosperity; while at the same time, not wanting to adjust to the virtues and the own material and "spiritual" miseries of a still underdeveloped country. By doing

so, we are perhaps copying parallel political and economical uncertainties of other super-structures. The result is that we continue to live and imitate piously what in other countries still exists, it's a fact, and thus are irremediably condemned to rotten conservative leftovers: biennials and their "salonard" spirit, the most qualified juries, the self-righteous critics... The result is still an arrogant ignorance of the gigantic and positive developments in the aesthetic domain, within these technologically advanced media; and a delay in the theory and practice that will have catastrophic and irreversible effects. This is obviously worsened due to the general state of ignorance that characterizes this country, and one 25th of April is not enough to change this. Let's remember that – in an era where in the advanced cities one can detect the tendency that museums cease their formal existence and transform or become substituted by large nucleus of experimentation, documentation and study – Portugal does not have a single Modern Art Museum.

Within this context, the few people that – for better or for worse – have researched new languages and styles are strictly isolated from the modern trends of our time; almost without awareness of each other; disconnected from any profound local obligation, and therefore also disconnected from any national or regional meaning.

These people do in fact constitute two large exiled groups. The first one is constituted by those who are really exiled, foreigners, the "estrangeirados", Portuguese living abroad but usually with a continued interest in what is happening in their own country. They are a social class with its illustrious history in the Portuguese culture and that has to be confronted with great seriousness in a study of compared cultures, on a European or even universal level. The other group consists of those who are exiled in their own country. This internal exile is a result of various factors, and not only a result of the relative hermeticism of our own language. One of these factors, if not the principal one: the growing gap between this dispersed avant-garde and the elite, which we shall here call the *salonard elite*. We are dealing with a truly false elite, which tend to transform themselves into an opaque paravent between power and the cultural and artistic truth that is always experimental and challenging. Sometimes this abyss becomes invisible (and therefore much more dangerous) when in this state of general disinformation and hunt for privileges there is no other solution than to support the *salonard elite* in the struggle against even worse opportunists. (Taking advantage of the general confusion almost all these groups use a very revolutionary language...).

Alternativa Zero comes as a response to the profound necessity to end this double isolation, challenging the *salon* formula (and its false democratic appearance) for a critical perspective and a totally assumed responsibility. Like at the beginning of any structured research it was necessary to assume certain risks to gain relevance, namely in the selection of authors invited to participate in this communal experience. The principal guidance has been the definition of the limits of our research, which obliges us to operate with stubborn rigor.

The limits. Leaving the idea of a jury behind (which generally is a disguised form of power, inevitable if...) we depart from two previous experiences, namely *Do Vazio à Pró-Vocação* [From Void to Pro Vocation] in 1972 and *Projectos-Ideias* [Ideas-Projects] in 1974. Starting from these projects and with some other principles that have been imposed by other conditions – we'll explain further on – we went as far as possible in investigating individual activities affirmed after 1974, but also in the course of the "Clube Opinião" experience (1975) and through the "borrowed" exercise of our critical activity. We also wanted, from the beginning, to decentralize, and therefore the collaboration with *Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra* (Óbidos, 1972: "Agressão com o nome de J. Beuys" [Agression under the name of J. Beuys]; Coimbra 1974: "Aniversário da Arte" [Art's Birthday]; Coimbra 1976: the participation in "Arte na Rua" [Art in the street]) has been very important.

Within these parameters – fundamental limits and fundamentally anti-salonard – we did not pretend to constitute a representational group, *if not representative of itself*. Therefore no other previous or "external" value systems were taken into consideration (such as *quality, the best and most authentic, most original, most representative* – arguments or pseudo-arguments that did not enter our equation) because in terms of rigor, these virtues would obscure our choices and create an amorphous and floating mass (Saussure): the contemporary aesthetic production. The righteousness of these choices could never be anticipated; only after these choices had been made, as well as the exchange, dialogue and ongoing study, one could possibly start an evaluation process. And this only if we are able to construct our own model, a simulacrum of our own activity, a pattern that allows us to measure it from *within*.

There are still other minor reasons (because they present a negative perspective) that transform into limits for an arbitrary and rigorous choice. Obvious reasons, elsewhere. But we are terribly *here* and unavoidably *now*: we must not forget the insufficiency of aesthetic information in this country. The values that could be our own are ignored and despised, and therefore not cultivated. Does anybody remember or has time to study the avant-garde, I am not speaking of authors such as Rodrigo and Areal but of the already deceased Almada de Negreiros? Does anybody take an aesthetic interest in the authenticity and originality of a country still defined by rural situations? Why is everything that comes *from abroad* frequently and falsely despised? It's therefore important to reiterate some points we should have in common.

We don't depart from any previous notion of the avant-garde (beyond the critical perspective defined further below). We also don't distinguish between type and generation; artist and critic; or, ultimately, between artists and anti-artists. We embark on an action and count on those who participate, that's all. Regarding some of the practical aspects (including budgets), we are led during this first phase by the simple criteria of creativity. This has been important, for instance, in the elaboration of the catalogue, which is also an open work that can be completed by the reader. To understand the importance of these reasons, here and now, it suffices to recall that a few weeks ago a qualified jury from our "scene" (it's important to state that all are friends of ours and nice people acting in good faith) asked worriedly: "A piece that consists of photographs... is it a *painting or not-a-painting?*" At this point it is useless to evoke modernity, or mention Haussmann and Man Ray – or even the most recent and enormous bibliography on the subject. This provincialism and academicism, which are not only characteristics of ours, converge in this "spiritual misery". But in this country we exaggerate academicism like a campaign that can serve as a negative paradigm of the most regressive things abroad, and therefore be fit to, as dreaded by a French writer, *portugalize* Europe. There is still Dantas' phantom and the horror of the new, an opposition against everything that may change habits and privileges, be they ideas or tools (videotapes, for instance), any more or less radical transformation of peaceful and apparently safe definitions.

Technological but also cultural delay... we oppose the era of moon landings and computers, but not for counter-cultural reasons that could make us opt for craziness without reason, a celebratory society and the Paradise Now; it's what Jorge de Sena pointed out when quoting a forgotten author:

I believe that dignity must be restored to the big stupidity,
which has always prevailed in this academy

There is still an ethical limit. I don't refer to the aesthetic-ethic binary, which is so important to the discussion of modernity and which we will deal with later, but a simpler idea: a simplistic and take away morale. We refuse to consider any national or international experience where a pig is sold in a poke; when "art" or "avant-garde" is

being abused for commercial interests, for example. Obviously. And it is important to highlight that unsuspecting foreigners can be taken for a ride when participating in *lusitanian little parties* with a dubious commercial or ideological reputation.

Tzara already warned us that "everything we see is fictitious". And that's especially true for the foggy eyes of any Marienbad residents. Madame's breasts are false, even without the injection of silicone. The explanations of what happened last year or during the life of previous generations are just baby food or the food of the sons of rich families that can afford private lessons. This profoundly imperialist struggle is the ultimate alienation of a quasi-without-father, quasi-without-god society (where the "artwork" wears a suite and a tie and pretends to substitute these lost, and less and less sacred values). Beauty instead of god or daddy. New names are invented. The word *Povo* [People], for instance ("Bonecos para o Povo" ["Puppets for the people"]) is often used as a metaphysical entity. Against these reverences and arguments that pretend to be historical, ZERO ought to be our limit. And hence TO START – as Almada Negreiros would say.

This does not prevent, but obliges a critical perspective.

PERSPECTIVE

Everyone runs after his own idea or
our own idea runs after each one of us.

Almada

Clairvoyance doesn't exist yet (therefore everything we see is false). In the manner of Pascal we know or bet on a certain coherence with the past, but that cannot be proven for sure. Every worldview is already a theory, and therefore comes with an assassination – in practice – of the whole present. The present tastes like a "have been"... The word perspective is one way to push apparently diachronic water on the mills of synchrony. This is a warning to those readers who are not ready to enjoy paradoxes in a deep and serious way; the words perspective, evolution and other equivalents are here used as rhetoric figures and not as a parchment for any qualities. We want to start with and we will only pick from the past what serves to define this zero, this bet.

DESIRE DEVOURS THE OBJECTS

Hegel conceived an evolution for knowledge: from sensible intuition to the concept. Then came the critics of Hegel and the philosophy of practice, and restored the idea of openness to the world, stating that there is always a beginning and a new action that restructures a concept. Although this reminds us of many recent problems connected to the study of the complex relations between structuralism and history, they have not changed the formal adequacy of Hegel's points of view: even though the concept is made and remade instead of constituting a point of departure. The manner in which this great German philosopher employed the Christian trinity dogma – taking the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as decisive stages of knowledge – is noteworthy. The Spirit, *the one who is to come*, corresponds to the victory of the Concept against the tyrannies of the sensible. This very fertile yet old idea has always been running in parallel to the most progressive Christianity. During the 11th century Abelard canonized the idea with the Abbey of Paraclete, dedicated to the Holy Spirit. And during the following century Joaquin de Flora was burned to death for daring to write these things which I glean from Michelet: "The Father imposed the work of law, which is fear and servitude; the Son imposed the work of Discipline which corre-

sponds to Wisdom; the Holy Spirit offered freedom which is the love"... "First comes an age of slavery; then an age of free men; and finally the children. First the nettles, second the roses and third the lilies".

(Out of sheer curiosity, I shall remind the reader that the spiritual doctrine, which died with the fires in Central Europe during the 12th century, was still well alive during the 15th century in Portugal. The readers of Jaime Cortezão know it well, as he included this circumstance as a favourable factor in the seafaring venture).

If you open any encyclopaedia, you will find out when consulting Abelard that the lover of Héloïse was a "precursor of conceptualism".

In aesthetics today the meaning of this is not the same as in the past, without however being completely different. The same thing could be said about the approximation between Hegel and the philosophic monks of the middle ages. Both trace an "evolution" which is rigorously that of modern art: a certain dematerialization of the object corresponds to the ages of the contemporary aesthetic fact; the spiritualization of art, and the passage from contingency to liberty, the primacy of ethics; what Duchamp called "perceptual indifference"; and finally – there would be so much to say about this! – what makes all aesthetic activity a type of *analogous* of contemporary thought. Everything could be summarized, with all its divergent branches, in this opening phrase by Merleau-Ponty:

"... Je referme le paysage et j'ouvre l'objet"
(I close the landscape and open the object)

But it is obvious that once the object is opened, the painting becomes strictly something *mental*.

And global.

Wagner and romanticism had the first intuition about the grand "Gesamtkunstwerk" – in which the isolation of different media is dissolved under the hegemony of theatre and music. The synchrony of all the arts has been much discussed in the modern era. Architecture, if not urbanism have conduced the arts, submitting them to the discourse of the City in function of precise and functional goals, which, although conceived with a technocratic emphasis, can be considered the heir of the ideal Renaissance City. The notion of design, for example, with its globalizing tendency, would be enough to reduce the big ideas of individual artists and substitute them with technocratic and functionalist organizations: (the result would be a design for shoes as well as city buildings). The arts would die, reduced to the simple state of decorative forms, nefarious in themselves. This limited vision (the opposite of Wagner's) widens the gap in all directions. Without considering freedom, there wouldn't be any consideration for the most urgent problems of human kind either: the contradiction between our ephemerality, the already observed obsolescence of all systems and cities, and the aspirations for an infinite human life.

But how have "the arts" emerged from all these conceptual thunderstorms? We could say, in fact, mortally wounded...

There is no doubt that "the arts" are being transformed more and more into lavish consumer objects, heraldic emblems of a poorly disguised privilege. On the other hand, when Bruno Munari declares: "We are not interested in knowing if the result of our research is artistic – we only want to increase people's capacity to communicate", then he confirms very pragmatically one of the most prominent aspects of aesthetic activity in our times, and that is the increasing importance of work on communication; not about things but about the relations between things, not about objects but about events. The conception of the open and participatory work is the continuation of the DADA discoveries. It would be easy to prove that an open artwork (one that can change depending on the *freedom* that is granted or seized, or even...

in perspective) does not correspond with the idea that the artwork contains its own finality. That would already be the criticism of Hegel's philosophy.

Acting as a disintegration factor, the truly modern artwork already comprises its own destruction. A painting doesn't consent to a frame, and a sculpture doesn't consent to a plinth, which would separate the work from the real involvement that it contributes to create.

There is therefore a break in the conception of space and involvement. We are all going to be actors in this space, ready to live the life as an aesthetic situation; and authors, which means that we are totally responsible. Space is therefore the *involvement* created by our actions, ideas and objects that are open... In this context the artwork will not have a meaning or "materiality" as such: everything is eminently aesthetic. Many roads lead to this Rome of a world without a centre... and without Rome.

"Desire devours objects" Hegel said, but in relation to the aesthetic objects, the author of "The Phenomenology of Spirit" has a more honourable death reserved for them, on the side of "God's death". In fact, we understand more and more lucidly and not always without melancholy that only desire leads to eternity, to deep profound eternity... (Thus Zarathustra spoke).

And that's also what the Danish Kierkegaard was concerned about during the first half of the 19th century. In all his work he dealt with the decisive problems in the relationship between aesthetics and ethics: "because aesthetics is not the problem, but indifference"... and ethics "corresponds to choice". When proposing a balance ("ent-eller") between aesthetics and ethics he importantly defined the total liberty of existence, "I was born by the fact of having chosen myself." Here aesthetics and ethics find their dialectic equilibrium. The awareness of the need to choose is exactly what later on would be proposed by Duchamp, along with the concept of aesthetic indifference; the "ready-made", the total perspective indifference, the anxiety to accept one's existence entirely, and the relevance of freedom. Schwitters would go on to say: "every piss an artist takes is a work of art".

ALL ROADS LEAD TO A ZERO DEGREE. FOR NOW ...

There is an irreversible direction of transformation, a dialectical cut attracting violence and misunderstanding, denying the slow and gradual reforms: a change from the aesthetic to the ethic; the definition of future freedom – utopian, reaching for all the present action. Art identifies with life. Border and door instead of frame.

First step: liberation of all means of expression, scaling down discourse to zero, emancipation of the word. Duchamp is for Saussure what Marx is for Freud.

But if the method of rupture, like progress or meta-progress (the door), belongs to utopia, the same cannot be said for immediate and direct action. And with that I mean the margins (alternatives) of this technique. We are talking about a process of multiple, apparently contradictory aspects: it would be important to demonstrate that, for example, "pop art" and hyperrealism belong to the same process as conceptualism. The reduction to zero runs in parallel to the very clear attempts that try to create zones of consensus and companionship, it is the end of loneliness and the death of the bachelor. Some of the practices that range from the "happening" and "fluxus" to the criticism of the Society of the Spectacle have one common objective: Utopia, Feast. The same could be said about movements as diverse as Abstract Expressionism or Action Art; Minimalism and Arte Povera. All forms of anti-art and counter-culture blend with diligent post-conceptual practices, because the new aesthetic research on time and space (the space of our own body, for example, in "Body Art", or the space of the world in "Land Art") is being rebuilt structurally, or at

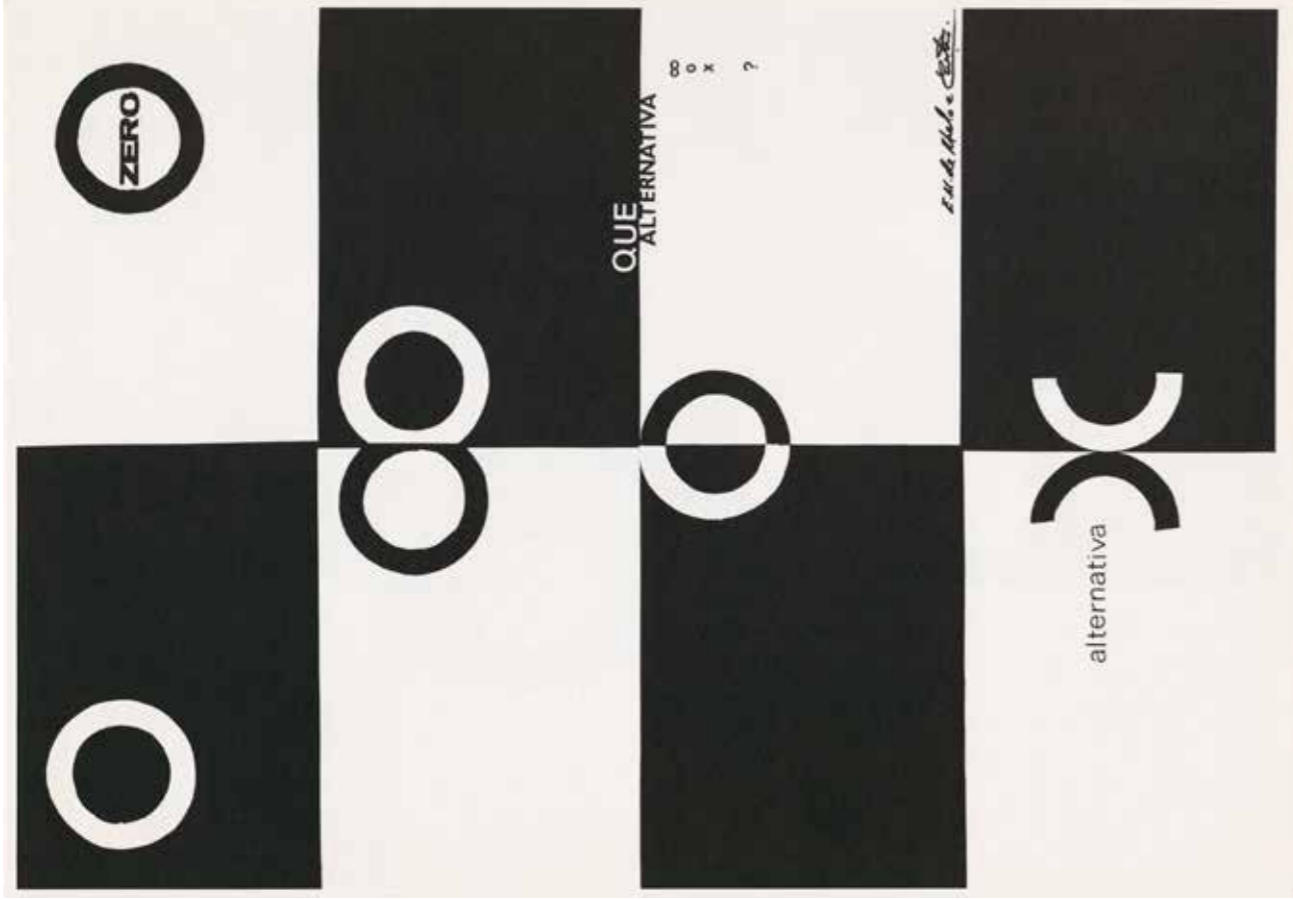
the most acknowledges non-compromised signs. The moustaches that Duchamp added to *La Gioconda* were not only the result of an act of irreverence but also the beginning of a huge semantic liberation that presides over the new human sciences and semiotics specifically; the definite fall of icons, and their promotion as parts of a language that finally desires to be free and poetic. This does not mean that such a language abandons the real and its problems, even the most pungent of them. On the contrary, this whole operation of rupture (and its consequences) tends towards the creation of tools that will serve the research of a purpose, for what comes after the journey "to the end of the night". This last aspect is not so obvious in the visual arts; basically because the more serious research and criticism is usually limited to a function of confirmation, or is implicated with several considerations with regards to a supposed magical field. An aesthetic activity that is essentially grounded in a search for consensus falls easily for alleys or deviations that are sometimes interesting but always theoretically opaque. In fact consensus presumes a concrete fight against a divided society (divided between social classes, countries and ideologies). So this is another direct or indirect constant in the modern break. Increasingly working with more ideology-free material, one can apply to the modern 'aesthetic operator' the same paradox that Engels applied to the scientist: "Whatever is his personal ideology, in the practice of scientific research he will always remain a materialist." The art writers, even the more clever ones, who are working for the newly emerging market – the market of "ideas" – always try to hide this truth. As Baruchello said "they are exorcising power romantically". There has not been enough debate on this state of affairs. The so-called progressive thought and criticism won't recover from their nineteenth-century delay and the political and ideological catastrophes of the twentieth century – "the era that doesn't die" (Almada).

A critique from the *right*, with good conscience and a lot of lucidity, has developed without difficulty in the domain of technocracy. In general, these authors cut up the facts, excluding whatever could affect the innocuousness of theory; or elude its opacity. (As it also happens in the excellent recent book by Lucy Lippard, "Six Years ...", in which the author included a conscious political operation such as *Tucumán* in the conceptual tendency without eliminating the respective theoretical consequences.) Therefore it will always be an adventure to discover a new road through the forest of facts and explications. And sometimes the solution is a really wild or crazy path.

In fact "Tucumán Arde" ("Tucumán is burning") was a conceptual aesthetic-political operation led by a group of artists from Rosario in Argentina in 1968, in direct collaboration with the unions. "Tucumán is burning" answered all these questions. The two vanguards (the political and the aesthetic), blended into one, once again – which is for sure the vocation of all vanguards. We could further refer to experiences such as "The Art Workers Coalition", USA 1969; the "Artists Liberation Front" founded in London in 1972, and many other individual and collective projects. But all this already hints at one of the polemic aspects we'd like to raise with *Alternativa Zero*: inside of a choice that will characterize itself through its semantic rigor (the semantic zero), an attempt to create an *internal* discussion about the state of aesthetic research in Portugal, modelled on our own works and ideas presented in this exhibition in the space in Belém. Will this be possible, despite the cold, all sorts of "cold" that attack and exhaust Portuguese culture? That's what we will find out.

Text published in the catalogue *Alternativa Zero. Tendências Polémicas da Arte Portuguesa Contemporânea, 1977*

Translation: Tobi Maier



E. M. de Melo e Castro's pages in the catalogue of Alternativa Zero, 1977

ALTERNATIVA ZERO

INTERVENÇÃO DE
E.M. de Melo e Castro.

(1) - NO CATALOGO/DOCUMENTO: A Tórnica
e grafismos a Tab/Banco

(2) - nas PAREDES: **4 SUPERFÍCIES**
de 1 m² cada - interpretadas
para a desvalorização gra-
fica de intervenções gra-
ficas sobre o plano de
Tramitê a paradas

(3) - AUDIO/VISUAL -
Trajetos de modo de
50 FOTOS. DOCUMENTO
da EXPOSIÇÃO
PORTUGUESA
POST 25/4/74
a uma inter-
pretação
simultânea
grá.

(4) -
Projetos de 2 filmes
originais 16 mm
- CONCEPTO INCERTO (1974)
- ÁGUA/METAFORAS (1969)
(em uma realização)

(5) - **AÇÃO NA CIDADE**
início de 30 novas
formas de Tramitê (ou au-
to) sobre
10 placas triangulares
10 placas circulares
10 placas quadradas

INVENÇÃO COLECTIVA
e sua distribuição pela
CIDADE de LISBOA

25/76

MELO E CASTRO Nasceu no Covilhã em 1932
Vive em Lisboa

... uma grande INTERROGAÇÃO sobre palavras
entendidas MORTO e VIDA. Morte para as
coligações capitalistas. Vida para a classe opera-
ria. Mas também interrogação sobre a vida de
cada de classe. Foi viveu entre mais morte e mais
morte e mais sobrevivência e um FUTURO.

(a má qualidade
da fotografia
é intencional...)

O caráter altamente dialético e
inquietante deste grafismo popular
(uma rua de Lisboa) confere-lhe a
qualidade de um raro e completo
TOMA-VISUAL (que pode a gente auten-
te!) E.M. de Melo e Castro.

25/76

PROPOSTA
DE
AÇÃO
COLECTIVA

1. - INVENTAR
NOVAS
SINAIS
NA
CIDADE
(utiliza as
- Triângulos
- círculos
- quadrados
- barras
deite fagi-
na, como
exercício)

2. - DISTRIBUI-
-LOS
NA
CIDADE

3. - OBSERVAR
E REGISTRAR
OS ACONTE-
CIMENTOS
CONSEQUEN-
-TES

E.M. de Melo e Castro
25/76

1 – Traditionally, painting presupposes an entire primordial model, a model imaginary and experiential world, of which the picture is, so to speak, an approximate illustration. The progress of each painter has been to illustrate without hiatus, in the fullest and most “credible” way, this invisible (world). Expressionism has been the demonstrative tendency of this dependency, the demonstration of the urgency of becoming object, and the demonstration of these characters of urgency, psychologically communicated and encoded. Expressionism, insofar as it communicates and defines the “states of the soul” to which it refers, presupposes words.

On the other hand, if the qualities of urgency are left unlived and accentuated, behaviors become undefined and an impersonal model of the adventure of pure communication takes place. I personally believe in the synthesis of both possibilities. The imaginary model is determined effable, conveyed through words that aren’t converted into images or other words. They are themselves, with the precision and imprecision of being enunciated. “Painting them” (including them in a painting) endows them with as absolute a “truth” as the one in an expressionist painting.

Their reference to the experiential, to the original model (the auto-biographical model) in the sense that it implies mutual specialization (spectator – author) makes the object as naturalist as it can be. What is risked is the ultimate dissolution of the object into the indefinite and incommunicado, and of the subject into the infinitely cautious. This is the dissolution in time that the experience of communication defines and presupposes.

2 – “Truly, one of the enigmas of art, and evidence of the force of its logicity, is that all radical consistency, even that called absurd, culminates in similitude to meaning. This, however, is not confirmation of metaphysical substantiality, to which every thoroughly formed work would lay claim as confirmation of its illusoriness: Ultimately, art is semblance in that, in the midst of meaninglessness, it is unable to escape the suggestion of meaning.

Artworks, however, that negate meaning, must also necessarily be disrupted in their unity; this is the function of montage, which disavows unity through the emerging disparateness of the parts at the same time that, as a principle of form, it reaffirms unity.”¹

3 – The critical ability of montage results from the apparent “strangeness” of its materials. Once these are recognized they picturesquely drift towards kitsch and heteronomy. If on the other hand these materials are recognized only as unassimilable, the critical content is omitted in favor of a more or less voluntary harmonization.

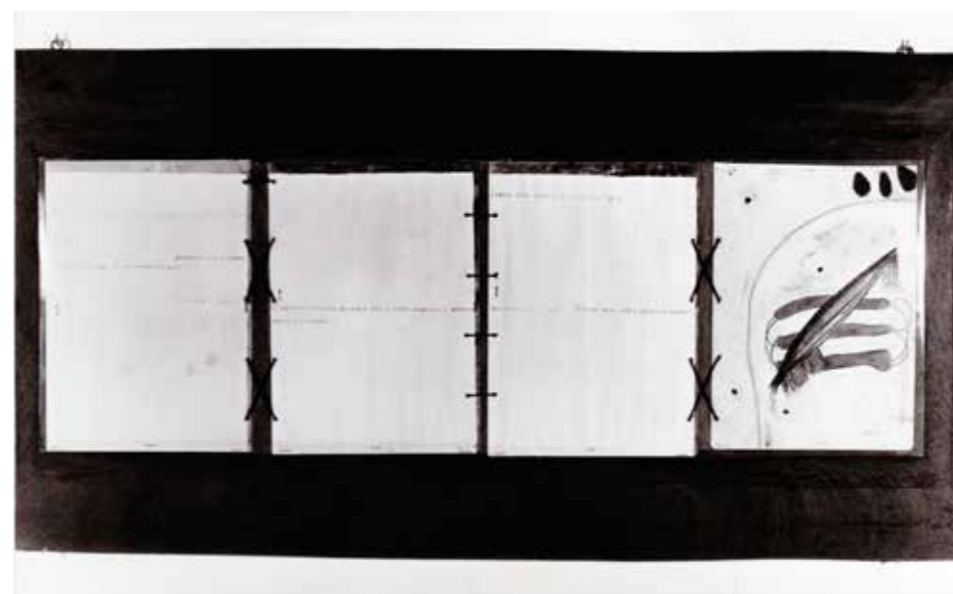
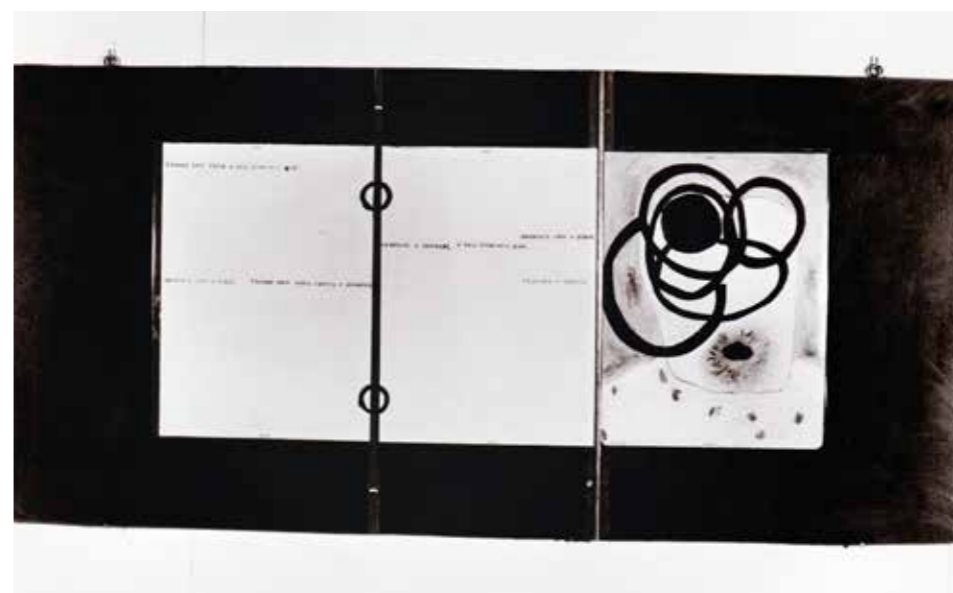
A pseudo sense recovers the technical authenticity in favor of an aesthetical *dépaysement* [estrangement]. Works that use montage must be subject to inefficiency or inattention. However, those works that transmit their process in their materials will be legible. That will be a part of the self-critical function that institutes them as an “open work” in the intellectual sense of presenting themselves as a process, a path. Such works will result from their comprehension, strategically eliminating the posthumous effect of the use of vulgarizing omission.

They will speak in the sense that they excite, close to monologue.

1 In Adorno, Theodor W.; *Aesthetic Theory* transl. by Robert Hullot-Kentor, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, The Athlone Press, London, 1997; p. 154.

Text by Ernesto de Sousa in the catalogue of *Alternativa Zero* introducing exhibited works by Alvaro Lapa: “The Notebook of William Burroughs (I)”; “The Notebook of William Burroughs (II)”; “The Notebook of William Burroughs (III)”

Translation: Claudia Pestana



Alvaro Lapa, "O Caderno de William Burroughs (I-III)", 1973
Documentation from *Alternativa Zero*, 1977
Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa

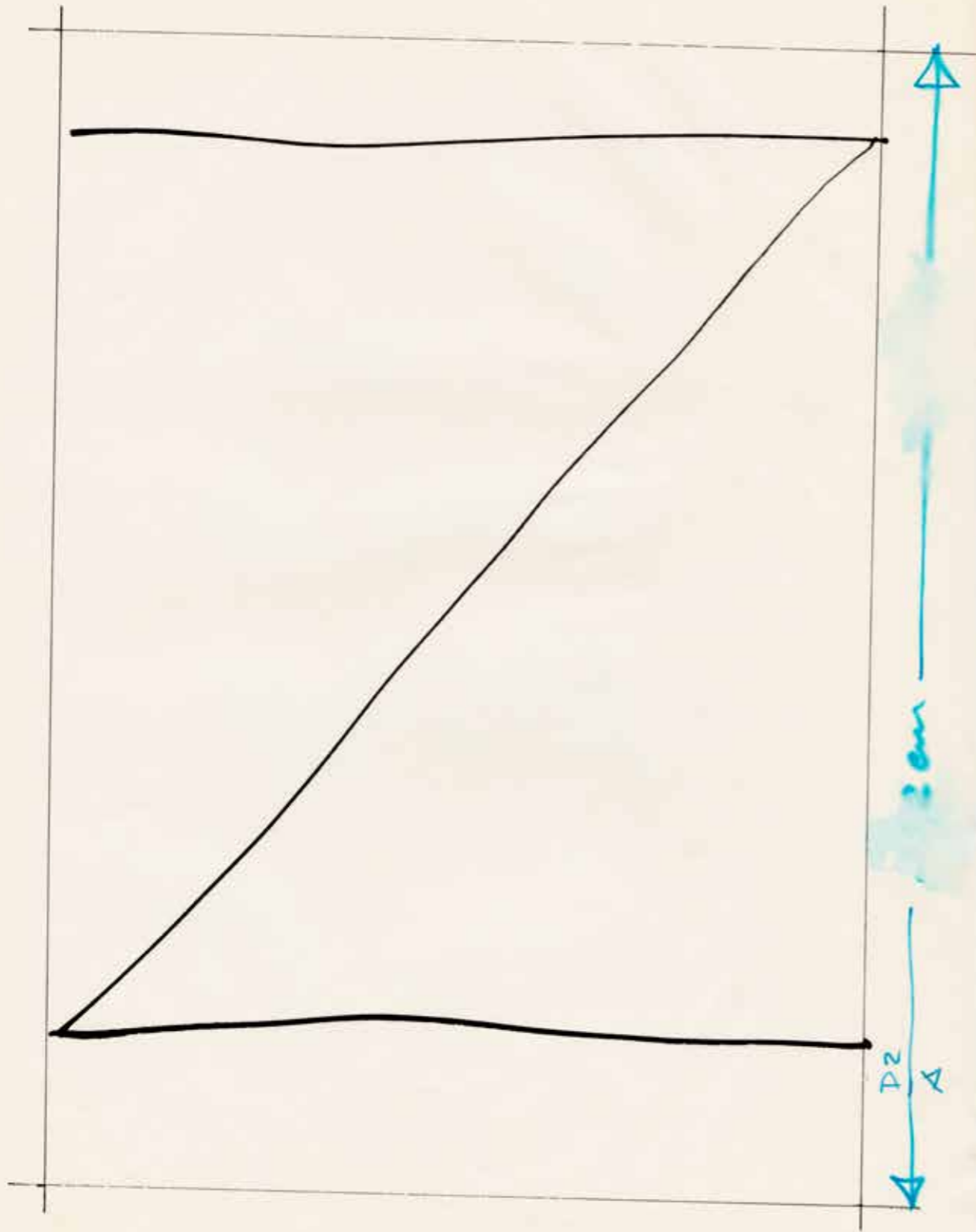


João Vieira, preparatory work for page in the catalogue of *Alternativa Zero*, 1977
Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa

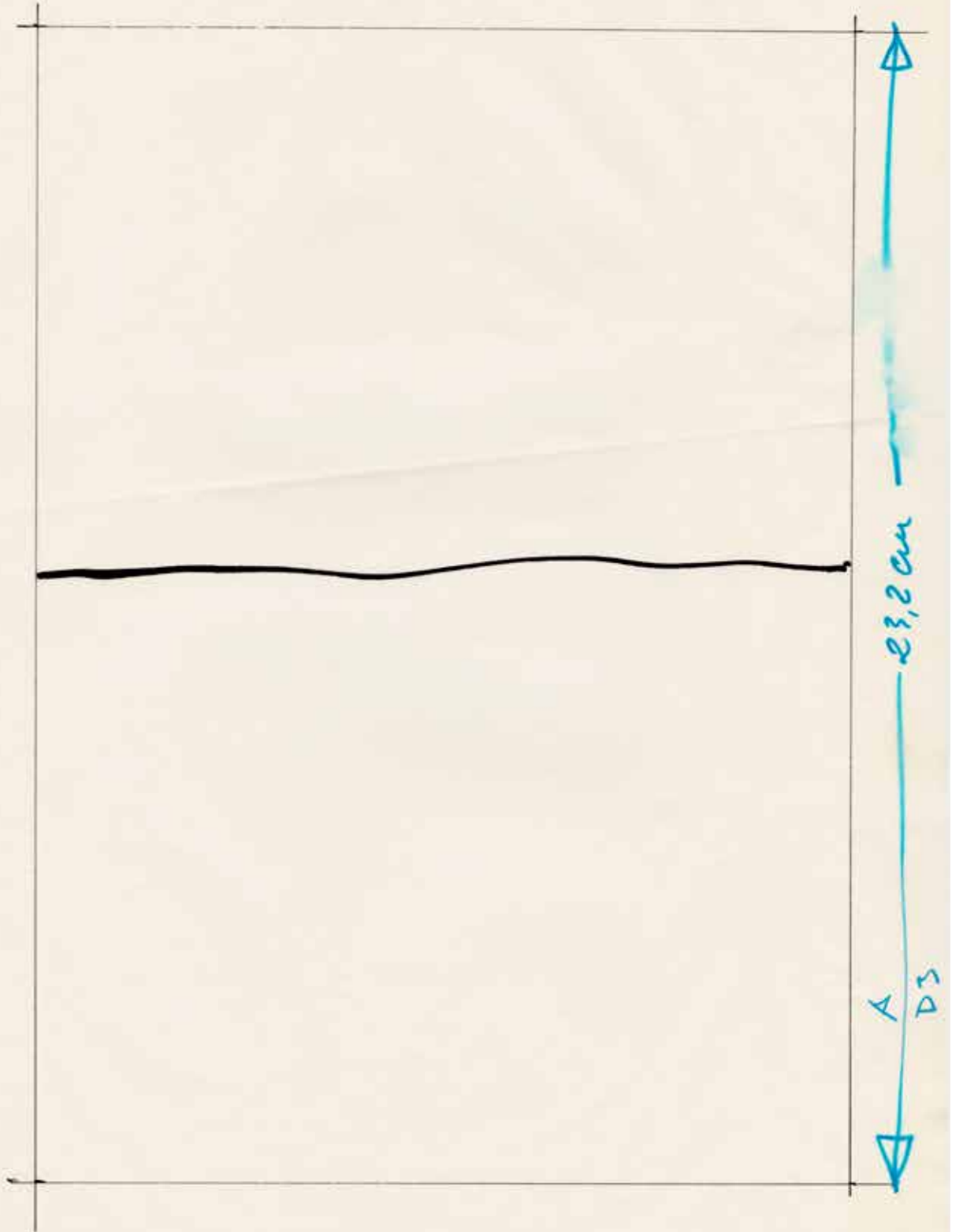


Ângelo de Sousa, preparatory work for pages in the catalogue of *Alternativa Zero*, 1977
Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa

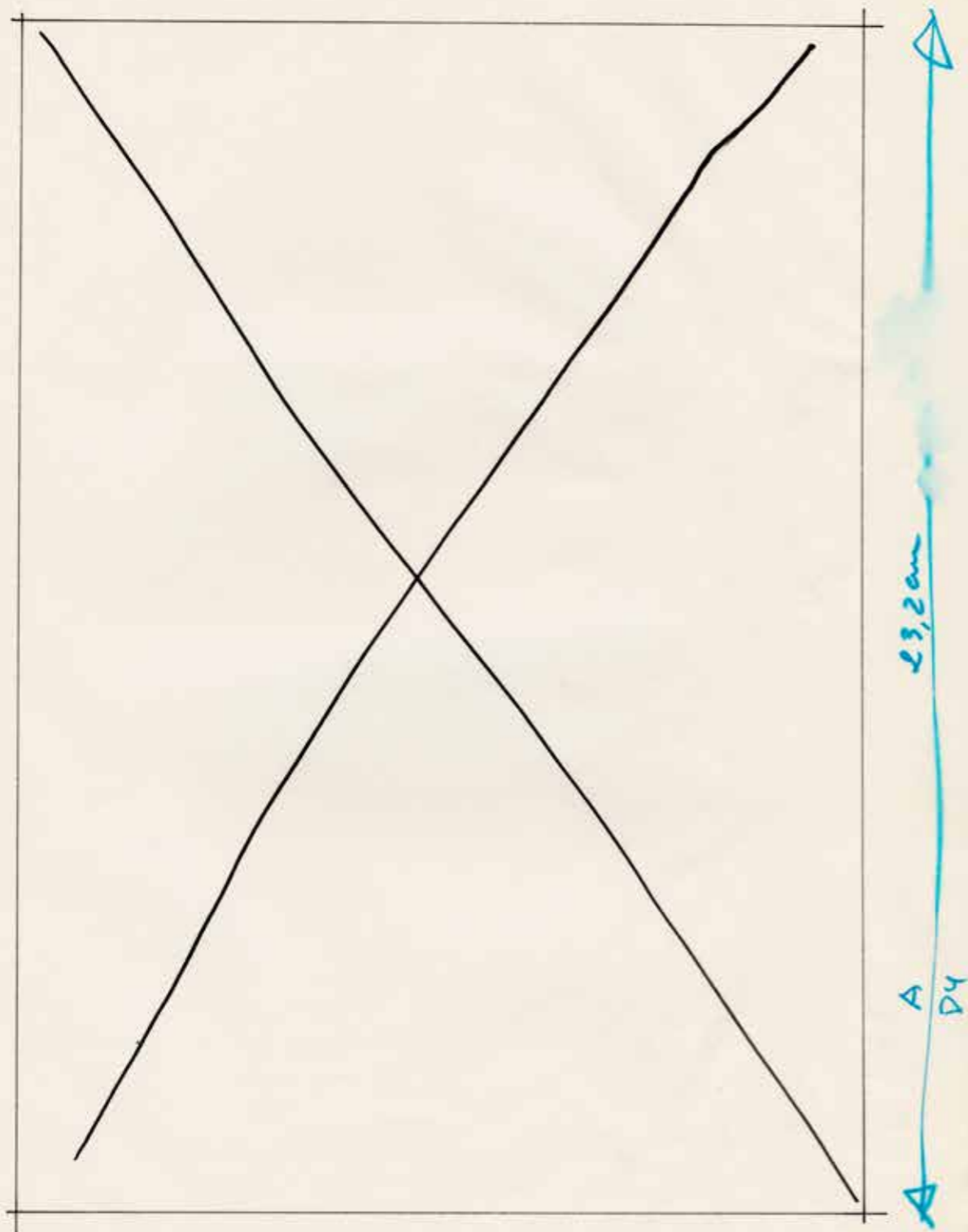
Angulo - folha 2



Angulo - folha 3



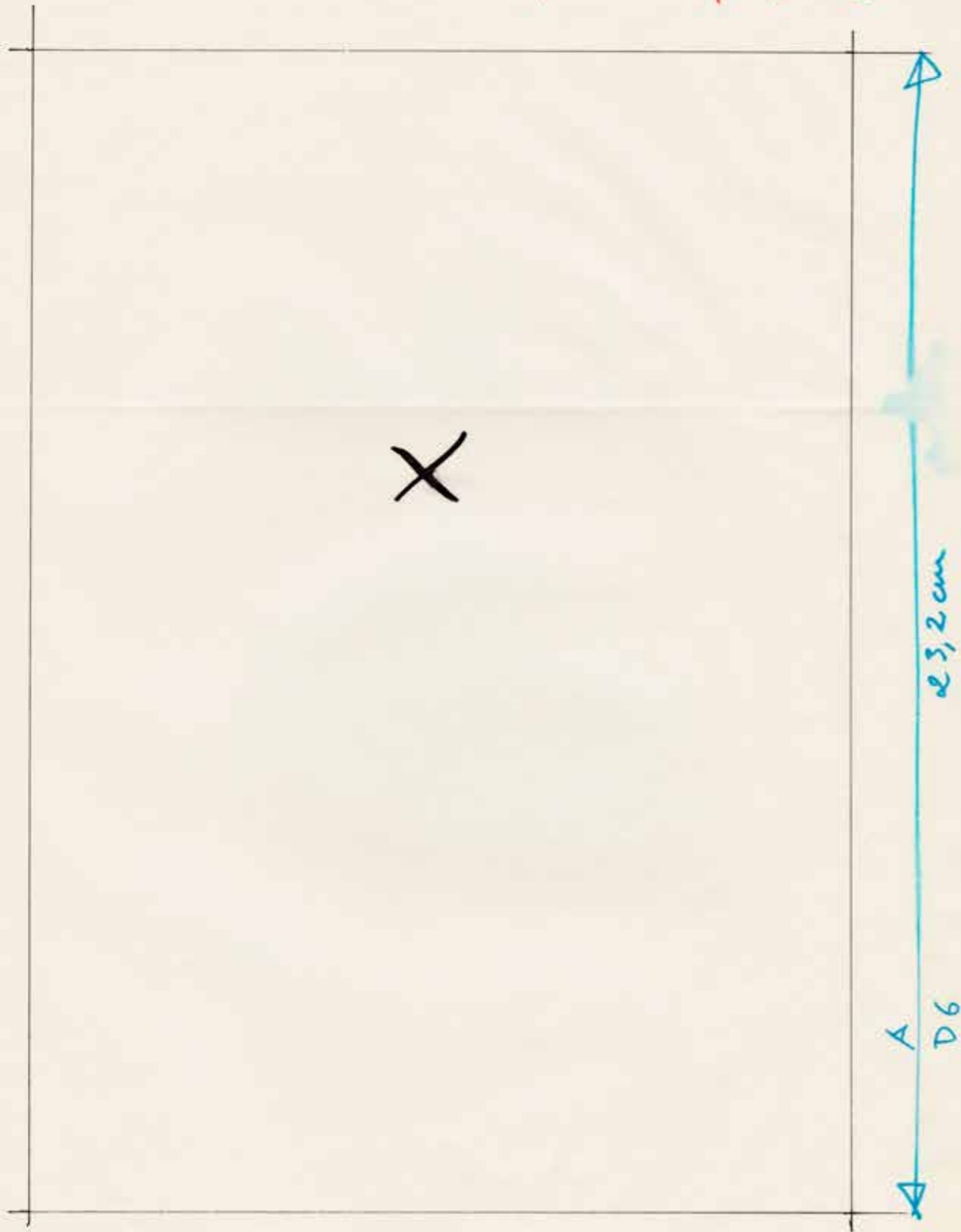
Angulo - polhe y



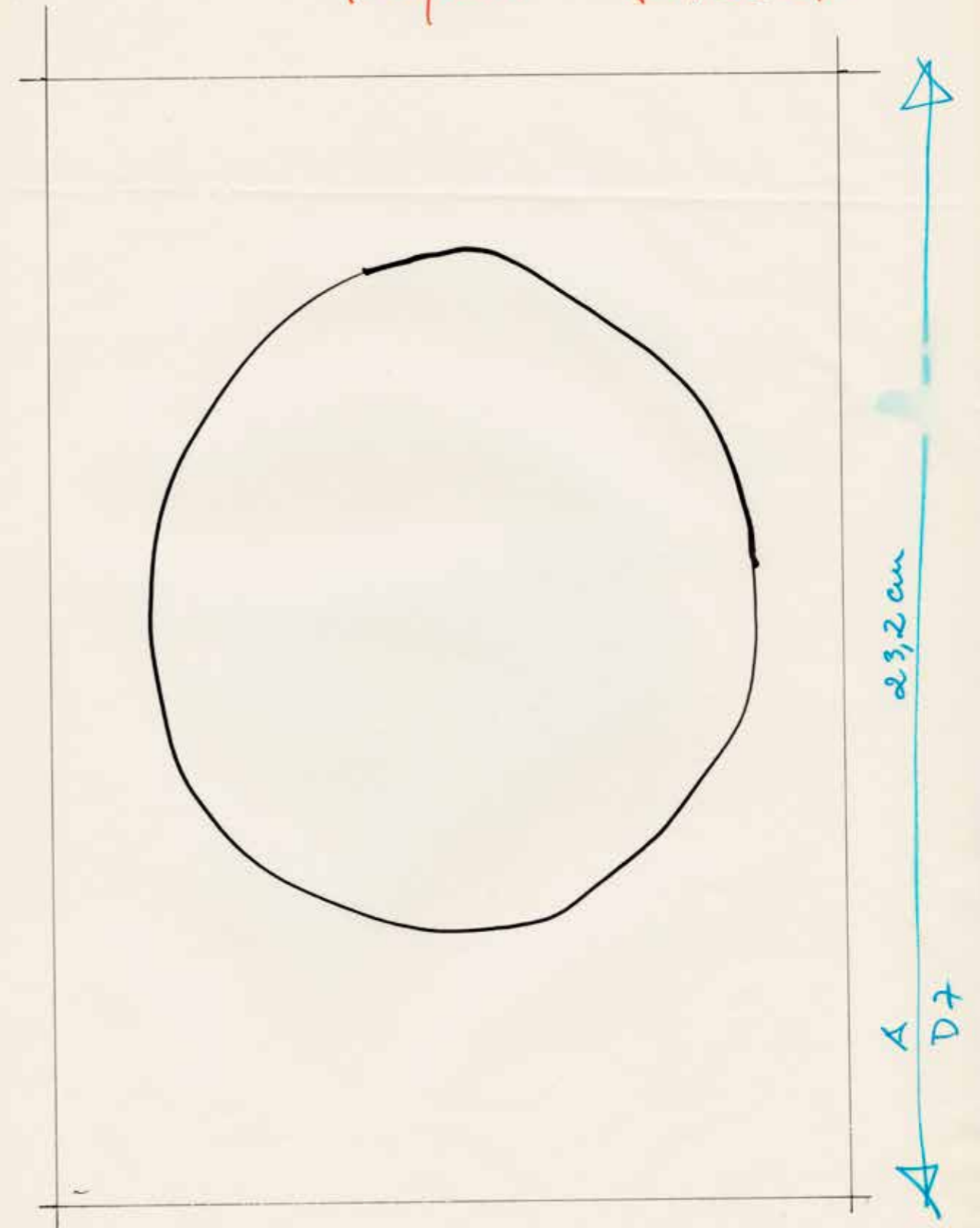
Angulo - polhe 1+

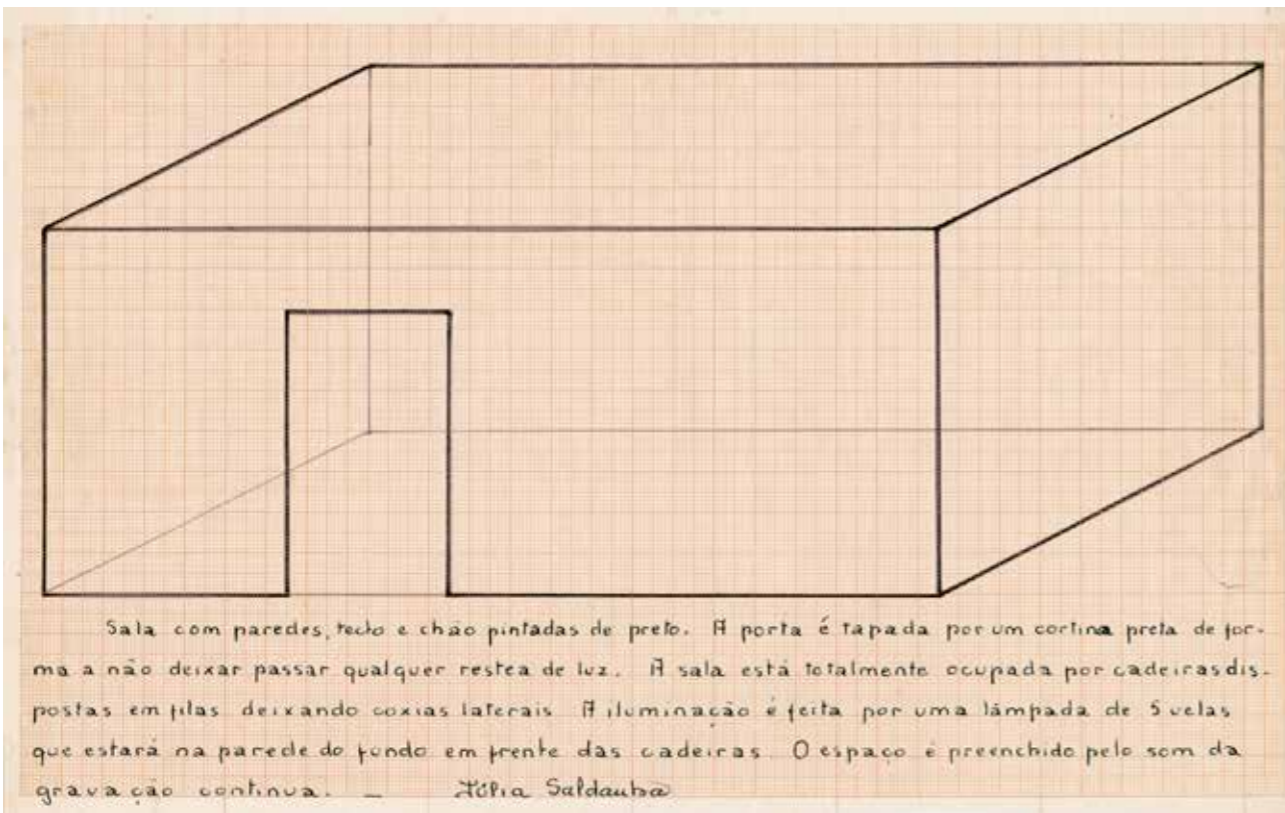


Ayudo - folle 6



Ayudo - folle 7

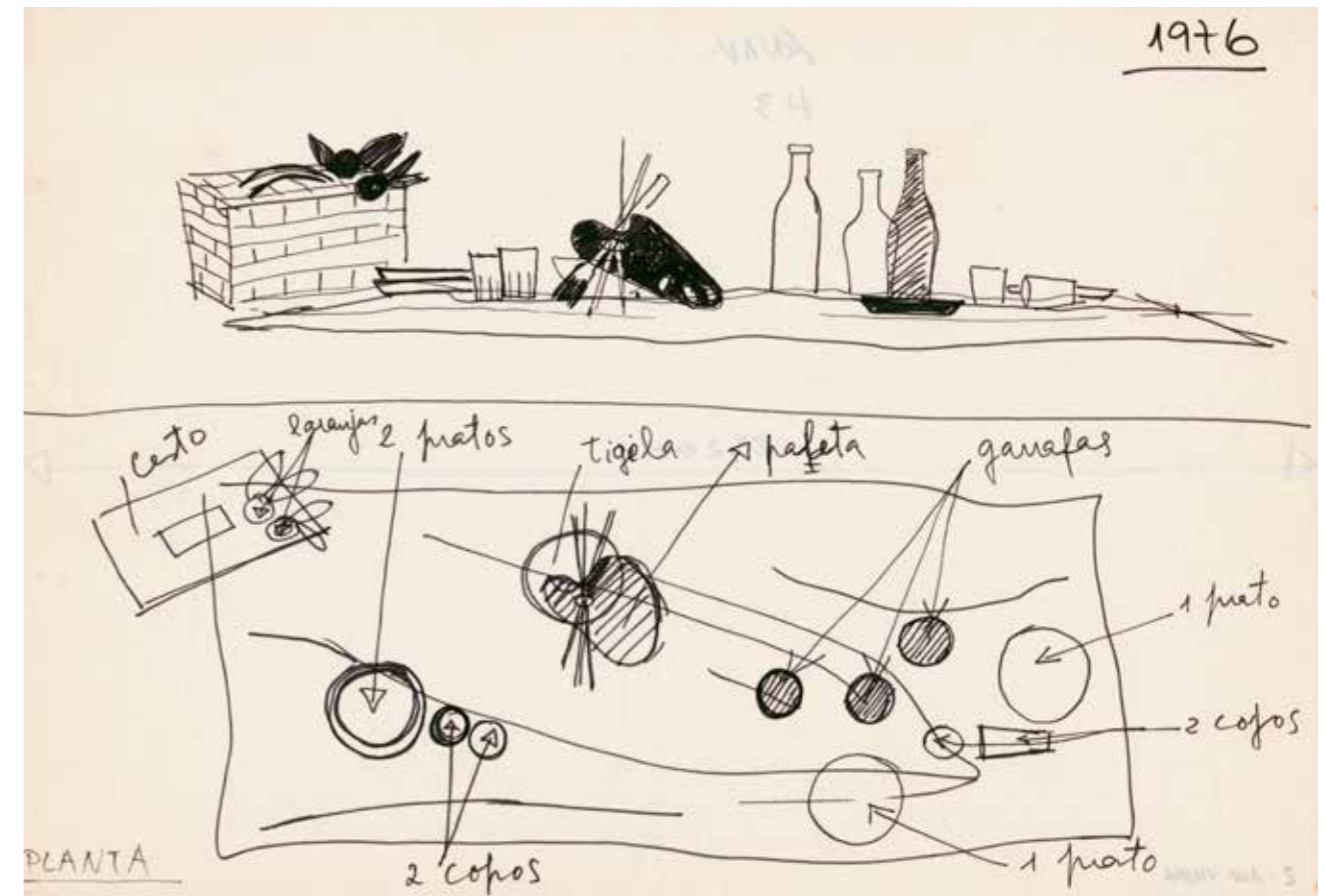
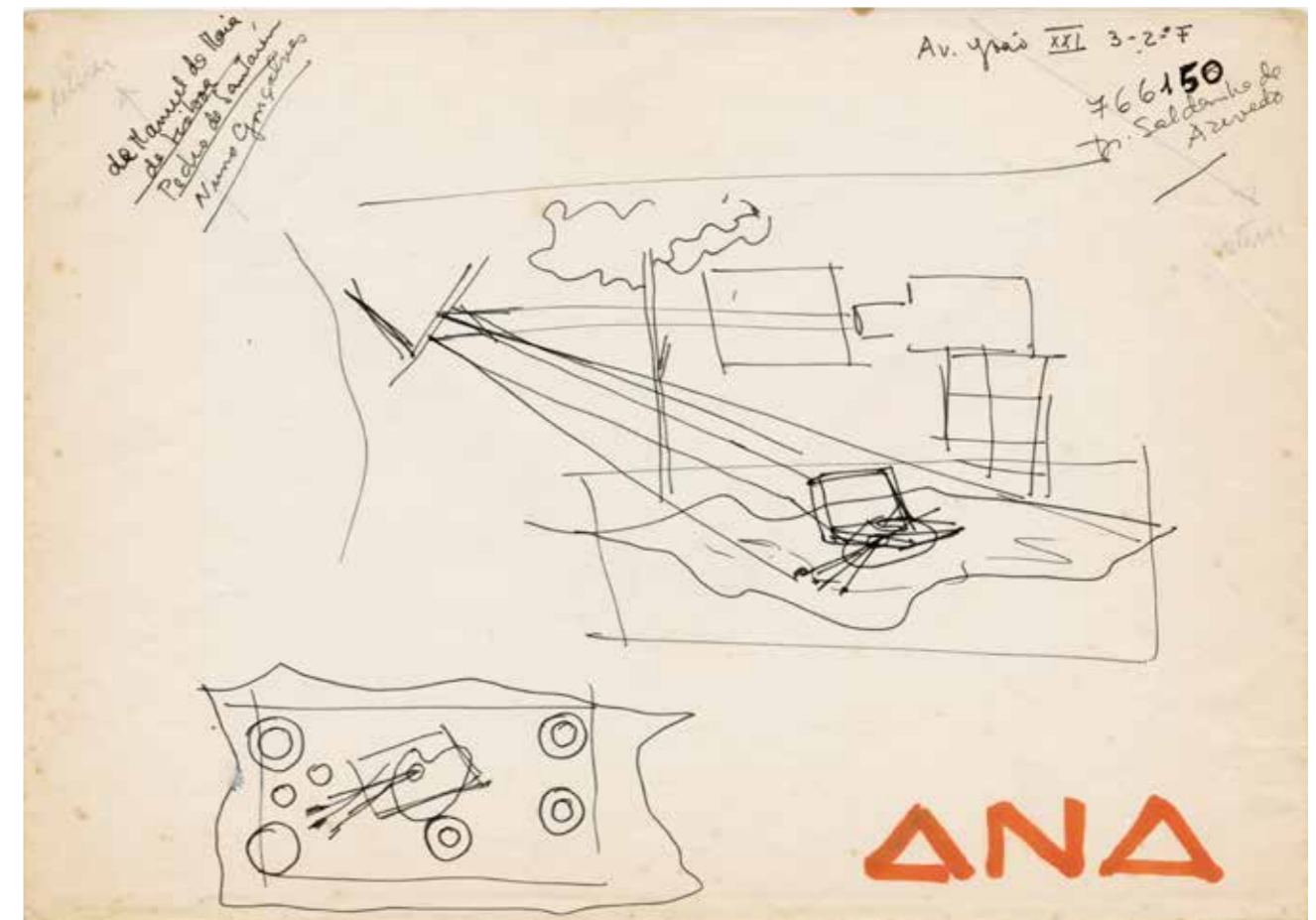




Room with ceiling, floor and walls painted black. A faint light enters the room from the four upper corners. The room is empty. It is filled with background noise and anonymous, uncharacteristic conversations held in the café (this effect is achieved with a surround recording). 1973 Túlia Saldanha



Túlia Saldanha, "Sala Preta #1" (Black Room #1), drawing reproduced in the catalogue of *Alternativa Zero*, 1977
 Documentation of Túlia Saldanha's "Piquenique" (Picnic) shown as part of the installation "La Floresta" (The Forest) in *Alternativa Zero*, 1977
 Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa



Ana Vieira, sketches for "Déjeuner sur l'herbre" (1976), reproduced in the catalogue of *Alternativa Zero*, 1977
 Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa

ALTERNATIVA ZERO

TENDÊNCIAS POLÉMICAS NA ARTE PORTUGUESA CONTEMPORÂNEA

objectos objecções projectos atitudes formas ideias
conceitos acontecimentos expansão exposição coi-
nportamentos arte antiarte diálogo culinária acor-
los desacordos meditação cinema video teatro pi-
ntura escultura movimento arquitectura fotografi-
a desenho música jogo comunicação festa object



GALERIA NACIONAL DE ARTE MODERNA - BELÉM
colaboração da secretaria de estado da cultura

ALTERNATIVA ZERO

TENDÊNCIAS POLÉMICAS NA ARTE PORTUGUESA CONTEMPORÂNEA



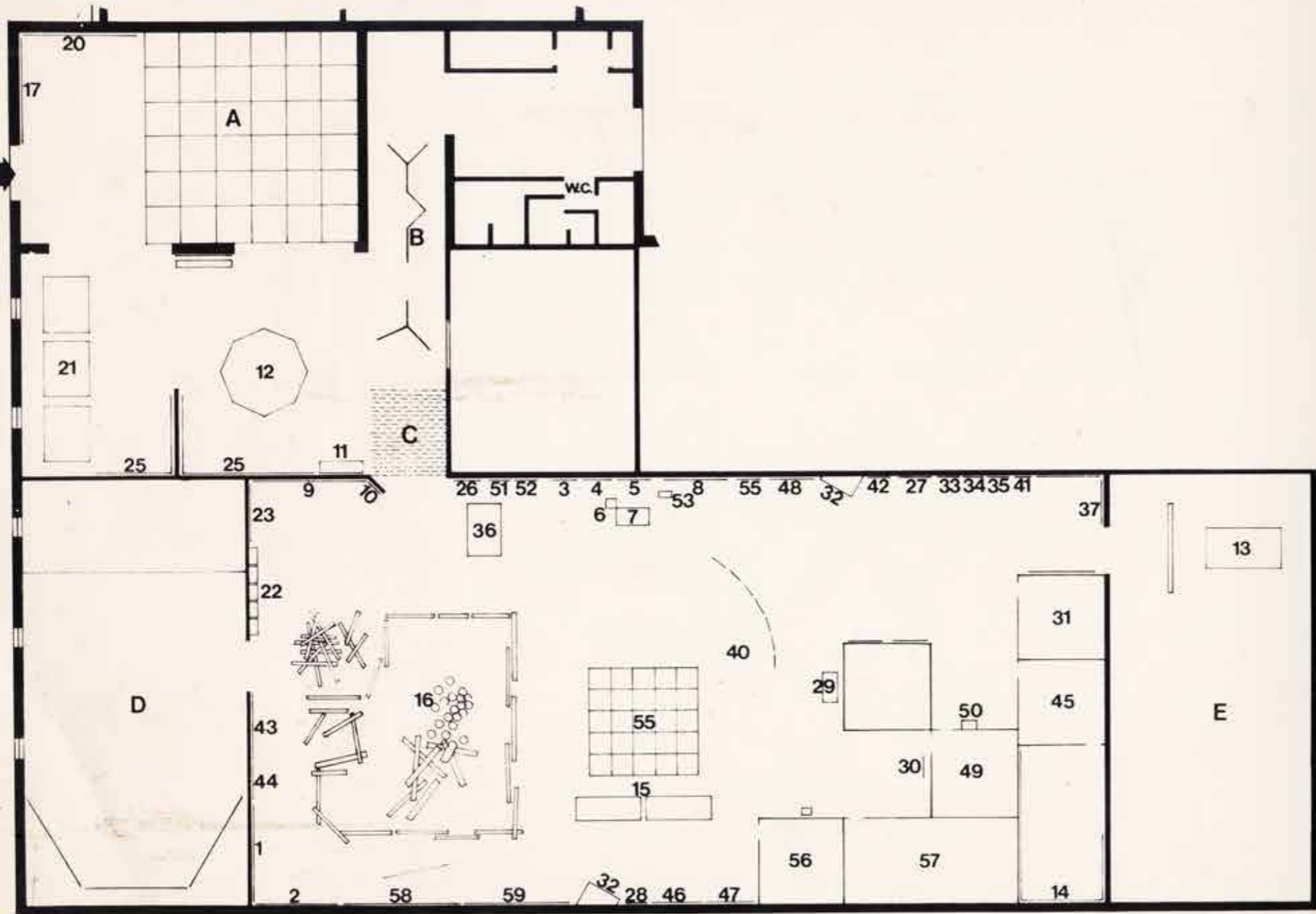
ALTERNATIVA ZERO

GALERIA NACIONAL DE ARTE MODERNA - BELÉM

dia 28 - 22 h
INAUGURAÇÃO

convite

Poster and card for Alternativa Zero, 1977



ALTERNATIVA ZERO

- 1-2 - BELENA ALMEIDA
- 3-4-5 - ALVESS
- 6-7-8 - PEDRO ANDRADE
- 9-10 - ANDRÉ
- 11 - ARMANDO AZEVEDO
- 12 - VITOR BELÉM
- 13 - JÚLIO BRACANÇA
- 14 - JOÃO BREHM
- 15 - FERNANDO CALFAU
- 16 - ALBERTO CARNEIRO
- 17 - JOSÉ CARVALHO
- 20 - E. M. DE MELO E CASTRO
- 21 - JOSÉ CONDUTO
- 22-23 - NORONHA DA COSTA
- 25 - DA ROCHA
- 26 - ERNESTO DE SOUSA
- 27 - ERNESTO DE SOUSA/JORGE PEIXINHO
- 28 - LISA CHAVES FERREIRA
- 29-30 - ROBIN FICP
- 31 - ANA HATHERLY
- 32 - ANTÓNIO LAGARTO & NIGEL COATES
- 33-34-35 - ÁLVARO LAPA
- 36 - CLARA MENÉRES
- 37 - ALBUQUERQUE MENDES
- 38 - LEONEL MOURA
- 40 - JORGE PINHEIRO
- 41 - VITOR POMAR
- 42 - JOSÉ RODRIGUES
- 43-44 - JOANA ALMEIDA ROSA
- 45 - TÚLIA SALDANHA
- 46-47 - JULIANO SARMENTO
- 48 - ANTÓNIO SENA
- 49-50 - ANCELO DE SOUSA
- 51-52-53 - ARTUR VARELA
- 55 - MÁRIO VARELA
- 56 - ANA VILHA
- 57 - JOÃO VIEIRA
- 58-59 - PIRLS VIEIRA

Alternativa Zero floorplan, 1977



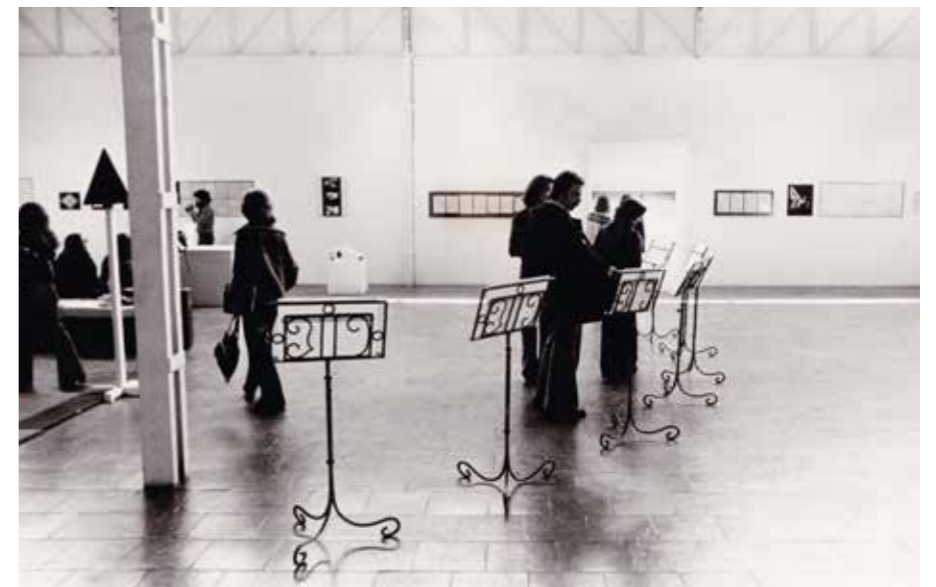
Alternativa Zero, 1977
 Ernesto de Sousa in front of Alberto Carneiro's "Uma Floresta para o teus sonhos"
 (A Forest for your dreams), 1970
 General view of the exhibition
 Signs by E. M. de Melo e Castro (to the left) and "Luis Vaz 73" by Ernesto de Sousa
 and Jorge Peixinho (to the right)
 Isabel Alves collection/ Estate of Ernesto de Sousa (pages 54-76)



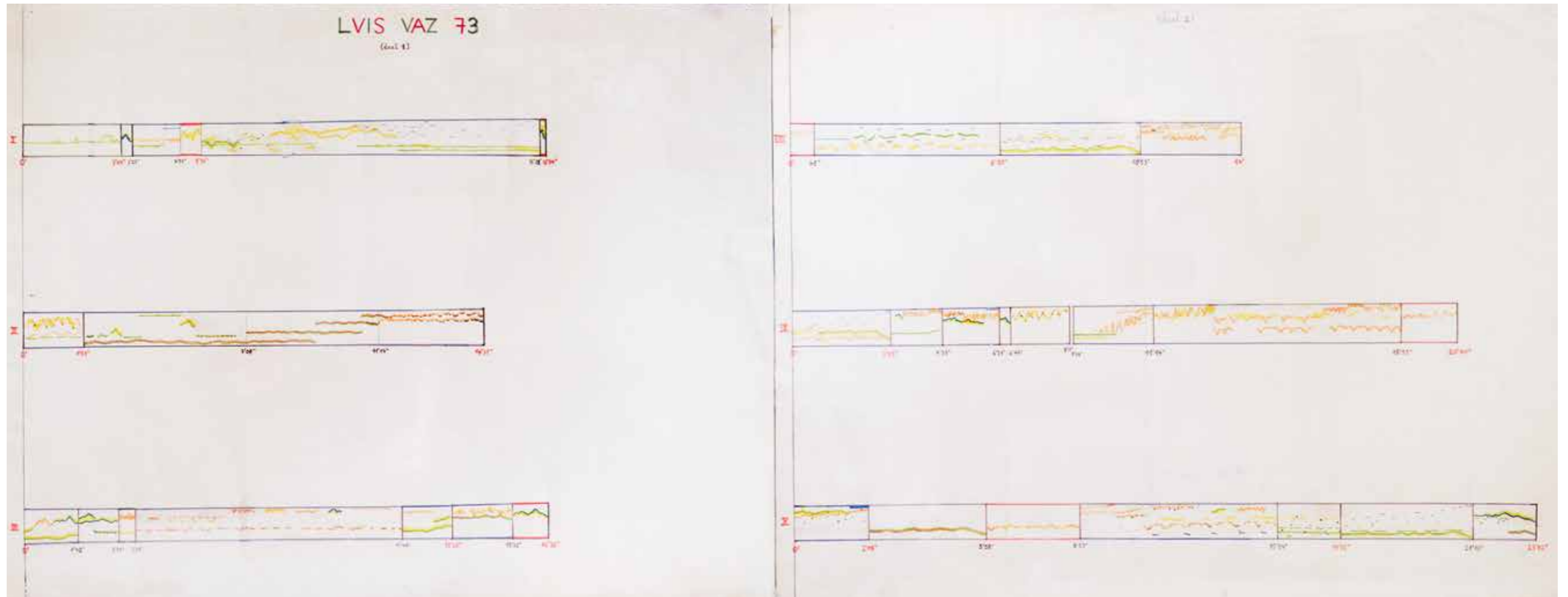
Alberto Carneiro, "Uma Floresta para o teus sonhos"



Clara Menéres, "Mulher-Terra-Vida", 1977

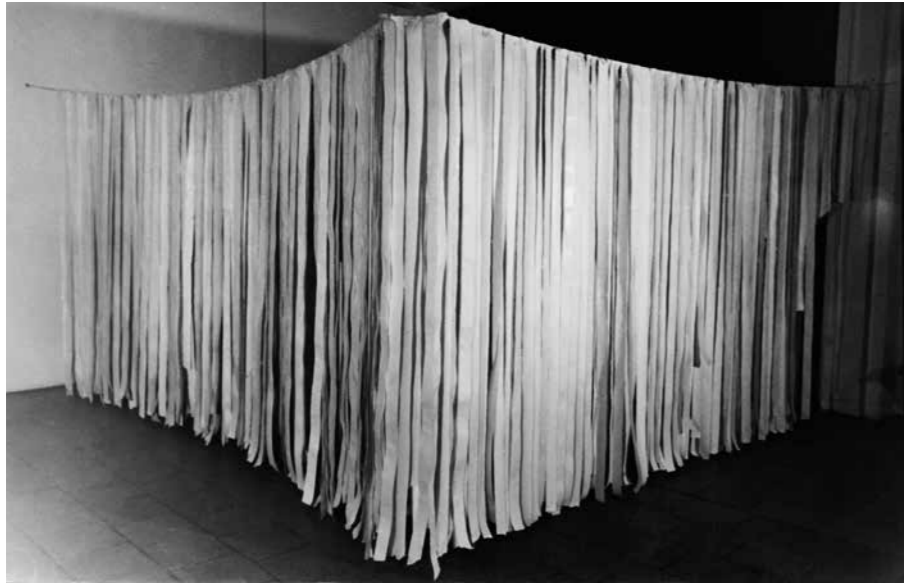
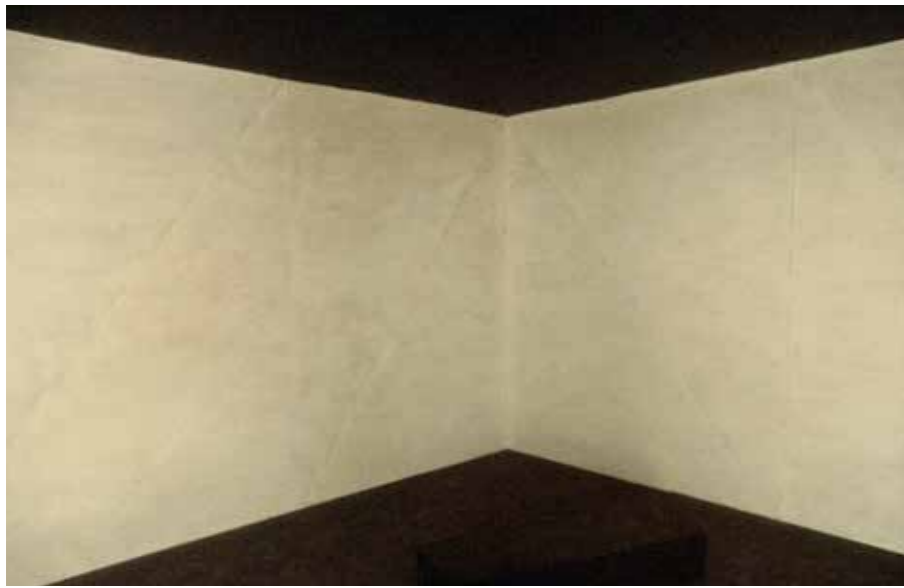


Jorge Pinheiro, "Partitura para canto livre", 1976



Ernesto de Sousa and Jorge Peixinho, "Luis Vaz 1973", 1973
 (installation view from Alternativa Zero 1977)

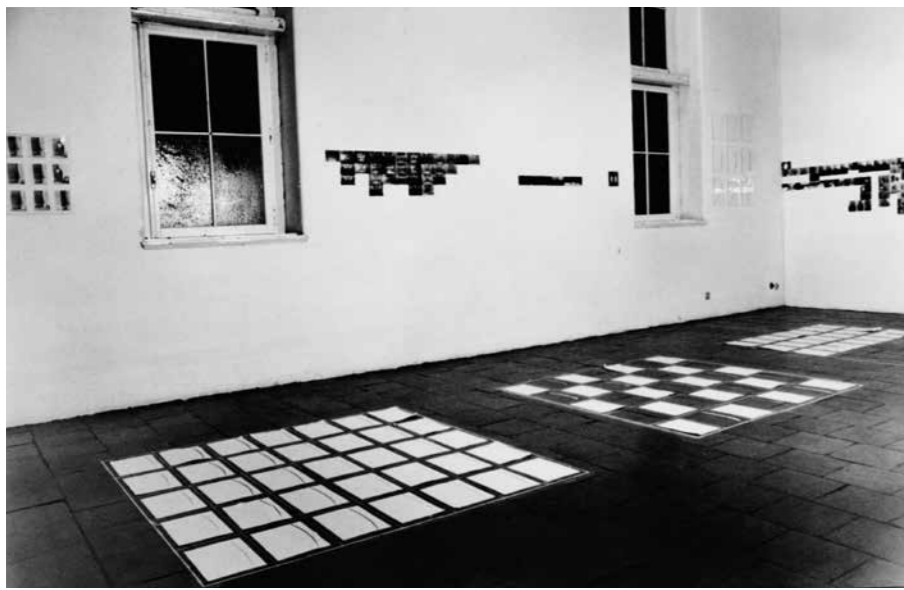
Ernesto de Sousa, "Luis Vaz 1973" (detail)
 Jorge Peixinho, "Luis Vaz 1973" (detail)



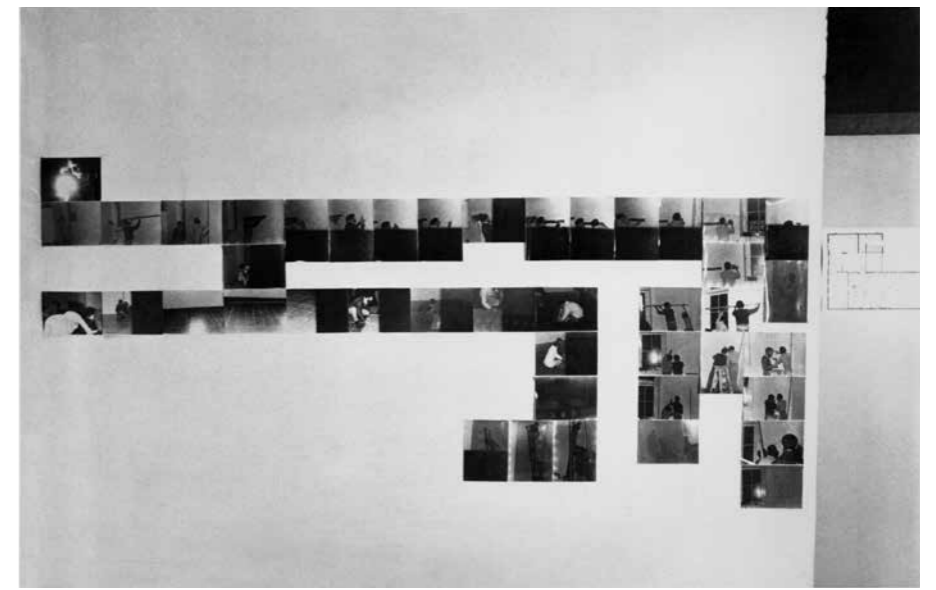
Ângelo de Sousa, "Sem título" (Untitled), 1977 (top left and right)
Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra (CAPC), "A Floresta"
(The Forest), 1977 (center left and right)
Fernando Calhau, "Espaço-Tempo-Mar" (Space-Time-Sea), 1976
(bottom left and right)



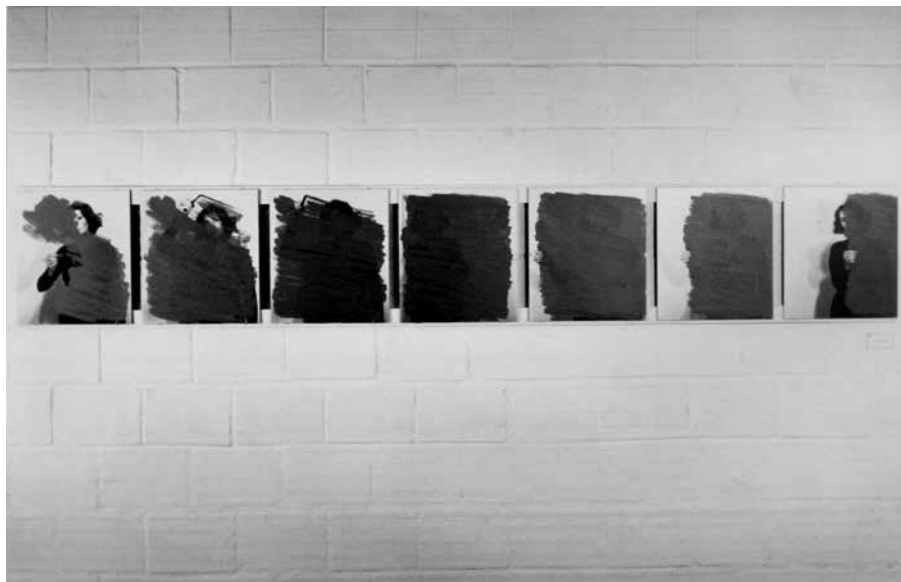
Julião Sarmiento, "Inquerito a 60 artistas" (60 artist inquiries), 1976 (top left and right)
 Victor Belém, "O Anfíbio Sonhador" (The dreamy amphibian), 1976 (center left and right)
 Noronha da Costa, "Caminhos sem palco: homenagem ao M.R.P.P." (Paths without a stage: Homage to the left-wing party MRPP), 1976 (bottom left and right)



João Brehm, "A Viagem" (The trip), 1973 (center) in front of "Space for relaxing and resting" and "Black Room" (to the left)



José Conduto, "Projecto tríptico de energia 'akâshica'", 1976-77 (top left and right)
 João Brehm, "A Viagem" (The trip), 1973 (center)
 Leonel Moura, "Arte?" (Art?), 1977 (center right)
 João Vieira, "Camera obscura", 1976 (bottom left and right)



Helena Almeida, "Desenho habitado", 1976 (center)
 Helena Almeida, "Pintura habitada", 1976 (bottom)



Artur de Varella, "Museu de Arte Moderna", 1973
 Mário Varela, "Paisagem jogo", 1975
 Poster exhibition (part of Alternativa Zero)



E. M. de Melo e Castro, "Não há sinais inocentes" (There are no innocent signs), 1976 (top)
Views from Alternativa Zero (center and bottom), with the signs by Melo e Castro interacting.



Carlos Trindade painting one of the signs by E. M. de Melo e Castro during the opening of Alternativa Zero (top)
Opening of Alternativa Zero. Antônio Palolo and José Conduto (de costas) animating Melo e Castro's "Não há sinais inocentes" (center)



"Espaço de descontração e descanso" (Space for relaxing and resting) by Ernesto de Sousa and Tília Saldanha



"Tudo ainda está por descobrir" (Everything is still to be discovered), processional action by GICAP (the intervention group of *Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra*). To the right (center and bottom), "A Floresta" (The Forest), by CAPC.



"O todo e a parte, a parte e o todo" (The whole and the part, the part and the whole), action by GICAP in *Alternativa Zero*, 1977



Spontaneous performance during the opening of *Alternativa Zero* (top)
 Children's activities at *Alternativa Zero* (center)
 "Love Piece", performance by Living Theatre in the street of the Alfama district in Lisbon (bottom)

A CONSCIOUS CREATION OF SITUATIONS

ERNESTO DE SOUSA

It will be necessary to build a science of situations, based on elements borrowed from psychology, statistics, urbanism and morals. These elements will contribute to an absolutely new purpose: a conscious creation of situations.

Guy Debord, *Contre le Cinéma*

This is our time: suddenly the power of words was recognized. Anyone can deride, surely we all can. To use although unworthily the word love socialism freedom brothers comrade or revolution. Or naively oh revolution my love. To say I love you or independence liberation power people. To say people. To use the people as an excuse in the name of the people art for the people toys for the people. Ballerinas in tutu palaces for the people the metropolitan of Moscow. A palace for the people who just yesterday were living in wooden shacks. And why not? A speech for the people. This speech is always a victory of the people. A respect. Forced to negotiate, the boss says Your Excellency or Comrade to the union delegate. He bites his tongue. Reverses. And the world becomes a different one, although the powers to be may be far from stop being. To throw away or forget all the old excellencies to speak small fry social democracy. Un mot un point: c'est tout.

Un mot un point. The words vanguard start. Absolutely new absolutely start rupture. And even the words seemingly worn out art culture. Or its semantic contestation anti-culture anti-art. And the word alternative. Yes, a parenthesis, the word alternative. We'll talk about zero later. About structure (*Eternal Network* dear Filliou). We'll talk about rigor later. Rigor yes my love as the honesty of someone who was never orphan of father. Because the Father was good. As a guru, as Almada Negreiros, as a good advisor: one who gives everything, because he is only interested in starting. THE GETTING STARTED.

Alternative. The American campuses of the sixties. The fight against the iniquitous war plus technology and future *watergates* to forget everything. The struggle for information the counter culture the memory of Fourier the phalanstery the Commune and communes the collective and passionate life. The conscience (on the Marxist background read all Marcuse up to W. Reich) that the true getting started is a distance and paradise now is a utopia for the time being. And that it is nevertheless, in the distance, in America that the revolution will be made. That the new world will be in the New World. And that this is as far as the fall of all false idols, of all systems of impoverishment and restraint how to expect and what will be will be: as: *mundus senescit*. In the meanwhile to be born, to begin, absolutely new, to be modern, as good as the word of Rimbaud. Because actually when I was born this had happened. And had died. In the meanwhile I was also taught words, the almost situations, had been scientifically prepared (phenomenology, Husserl, topology) the new instruments, the tools of true freedom (Marx, Husserl, Saussure, Freud, Duchamp, and also Marcel Mauss, all the others, and even the contradictions). In the meantime I was taught semantics and also semiology the words. It was in this context that the idea came

up the word alternative. Not to wait. To fight (as a militant of the future, *engagé* was said when it was said *les lendemains qui chantent*) yes militant *engagé* and whatever Machiavelli's tactics and teachings if necessary. But meanwhile alternately to live at the top of our lungs, oh joy oh joy oh joy. To fight and because alternatively to live. To live the full joy and because alternatively to fight.

But of course, like all times this was a time. Words were not so guarded yet. Still misuse is to be expected from them. Still any time the devil comes. Domestic devils little devils but domestic devils bring it may be our home and our home a world the world. Here oh garden of Europe lying by the seaside to give new worlds to the world. Here in spite of everything your breasts and yours too. Because one and the other converge to me my orgasm. As your immense thighs, if you know how to read me between the lines and they—they even find virility very chauvinistic. The covert stones of the megalithic, the menhirs, the cromleques. Almendros Monsaraz the agrarian reform the beloved Henrique de Barros and of course Alvaro Cunhal also the phallic cult all those contradictions I say without shame and only blushing a little as a teenager my homeland. A history to respect. Here too the struggle is of words. Words that are worth I don't know how many but many kilos of TNT, and even more many truncheons, pickaxes. Words, concepts, myths, larger rivers. Words like vanguard, the new, rupture, subversion and alternative although with a more recent history, or freedom and the others you know. That you can say or not, because at the "bottom of an ancient bed" you may have lost all reason but not even a crumb of knowledge. And I am talking about knowledge.

Therefore alternative, that justice be one, for the future and the family of words that refer to the future. Justice that required rigor. Relentless radical obstinate rigor. You can tell me about non-work. I understand you well, there is no artwork but fully lived *eternal network* or if you want it is strictly the same the poetry should be made by everyone the power to those who work, etc. Meanwhile turn the devil's weapons against the devil (that is, our own that the devil stole from us). If you want to talk to me about an *arte povera*, Germano Celant, about a *minimal* expression or even *silence*, Guy Debord, Cage, it is always an attitude that has to take form, discourse, and ultimately word. That will never be word, this is freedom, without a speech, and ultimately word. That will never be word, that is freedom, without a discourse... against which the word and to start are conjugated. Hence the rigor, hence the importance of our comrades the "cleaning women", the work well done, the competent carpenters, (wall) painters, electricians. Hence the importance of humbly recognizing our didactic responsibilities. Hence the zero the rigor. To start. Lost Paradise? Paradise Reencountered. The tree of life. East of paradise god placed an angel with a sword of fire to guard the path leading to the foot of. Desire of. Will we cross these deserts will we face the swords of fire? I don't know, we don't know. But is there another way?

José-Augusto França, in *Diário de Lisboa*, 21/11/77:

"Starting from Zero is very difficult and very dangerous, and right because it is dangerous and difficult to reach the Zero that we supposedly depart from, and that often, if not always, is not as zero as that.

... But the truth is that my friend Ernesto de Sousa has no other alternative."

Lying, or to start from zero. Perhaps that is always the truth, and we will easily recognize it when we have this knowledge of the situations that we lack so much. But for now, that the knots the empire weaves have slackened, what are we waiting for?

I am alone everything is simple
I have washed the house inside
I have dressed the house in white inside and out

I have arranged everything in their places
I have made calculations and I am waiting for you
always struggling
time is not important
nor is death
my body is your body our house

your body
white
and arranged
and the memory of your warmth
we see how all doubts dissipate
the mists
the darkness
in the warmth alternative and diurnal
of the house everything is simple

I got rid of repelling insects

To begin with, note that when entering the "space of Belém" the visitor did not encounter *one* exhibition: he came across, or *went through* several exhibitions: "The Pioneers of Modernism in Portugal" (photographic and documental exhibition); "The Forest" (walk through space and mini-exhibition of the Plastic Arts Circle of Coimbra); "The vanguard and the media – The Poster" (walk through space with the first of a series of exhibitions on this topic); and finally, the "exhibition" *Alternativa Zero* (itself). In addition there were spaces to perform several events, some spontaneous, others programmed. Among these we mention some that were possible to carry out. Several concerts. Two with Jorge Peixinho, the Lisbon Contemporary Music Group, elements of the Group 'Colecviva' and ADAC (in formation), one of which admitted the spontaneous participation of the public (concerto-happening regulated with "traffic signs" by Mello e Castro). Concert of the ADAC Group. "Concert of ocarinas next to a kinetic machine with random projection" (by Júlio Bragança; the concert players: Lídia Cabral and Pedro Cabral). Within the program of *Alternativa Zero*, but in the rooms of AR.CO, were also held: a concert with Constança Capdeville and the Group 'Colecviva', and a jazz session with the Group Anarbande from Porto, and experimental poetry by Mello e Castro, Silvestre Pestana and José Conduto. Several "films" were displayed, and series of slides from the following operators: Fernando Calhau, Ângelo de Sousa, Mello e Castro, Ana Hatherly, Ernesto de Sousa, António Palolo, Carlos Calvet, Artur Varela, Vítor Pomar, Fernando Matos, Graça Pereira Coutinho, José Carvalho, Leonel de Moura and Vítor Belém. By Fernando Calhau there were experiences of "simultaneism" with video, fixed projection and "film". In the realm of *events*, we will remark: "Akashâ Escolar" (José Conduto, José Carvalho, Palolo, etc.), with direct recording, video and closed circuit television; "Conference – event" by André, "The Whole and the Part" by C.A.P.C., "There are no innocent signs" by E. M. de Mello e Castro, etc.

Concerning the exhibition *Alternativa Zero* one of the edited catalogs ("descriptive catalog") stated:

This "exhibition" had the participation of: Helena Almeida, Alvess, Pedro Andrade, André Gomes, Armando Azevedo, Vítor Belém, Júlio Bragança, João Brehm, Fernando Calhau, Alberto Carneiro, José Carvalho, Manuel Casimiro, E. M. de Melo e Castro, José Conduto, Noronha da Costa, Graça Pereira Coutinho, Da Rocha, Ernesto de Sousa, Lisa Chaves Ferreira, Robin Fior, Ana Hatherly, Lagarto & Nigel Coates, Alvaro Lapa, Clara Menéres, Albuquerque Mendes, Leonel Moura, António Palolo, Jorge Peixinho, Jorge Pinheiro, Vítor Pomar, José Rodrigues, Joana Rosa, Tília Saldanha,

Julião Sarmento, António Sena, Sena da Silva (with a painting on a tram that circulated in the city of Lisbon), Ângelo de Sousa, Artur Varela, Mário Varela, Ana Vieira, João Vieira (offering an empty space for the public's free creativity), Pires Vieira, A. F. Alexandre, Helder M. Ferreira, João Miguel F. Jorge, Joaquim M. Magalhães, Lídia Cabral, etc. José Manuel Costa Alves and João Oliveira were in charge of the photographic coverage. The "design" of the exhibition and the poster were made by Carlos Gentil-Homem. The graphic study for the catalog was carried out by João Melo. The "exhibition" was organized according to a critical perspective of Ernesto de Sousa. Some of these participants were in public for the first time. Regarding the first 41 registered names, the following provisional statistics were performed: 10 were exposing for the first or second time in Portugal; 15 (34%) are "teachers" in universities or specialized schools (ESBAP, ESBAL, Lisbon Music Conservatory, Nova University, AR.CO, CAPC, etc.), 18 (43%) lived in Lisbon, 14 (34%) live outside Lisbon, Porto, Coimbra, Évora-Monte, Algarve, 9 (21%) live abroad, Paris, Nice, London, Brussels, The Netherlands. As for the exhibits, some were created expressly for *Alternativa Zero*, others however cover a wide range of time. The oldest are: "Machine II" by J. Bragança (1969) and "A Forest for your Dreams", by Alberto Carneiro (1970). 17 pieces are from 1974 or previous years; 18 are from 1975-76; the remaining, about 20, from 77 or 76/77. This statistic objectively shows the diverse and possibly *prospective* feature of this enterprise.

I should also be noted the collaboration of the 'Living Theater': a *sign* of the participation of Theater, more complex and that was not put into practice by several material and organizational obstacles. The presence of Living was verified in the collaboration of the National Museum of Ancient Art, National Society of Fine Arts, Oporto School of Music, Coimbra's Machado de Castro Museum, and the financial support of the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Secretary of State for Culture. This Secretariat also provided the basic financial support to *Alternativa Zero*.

The main issue at stake from the beginning, and still in stake regarding this exhibition may be expressed in these terms: given its characteristics ("polemical tendencies of contemporary Portuguese art") this enterprise would result in another production that would only benefit a cultured elite, illustrating "only an increasing isolation of the participating artists regarding the working classes" – as was recently written in a cultural bulletin? Not intending to answer this momentous question now, the following data should be recorded. The exhibition was visited by more than 10,000 people. On Saturdays and Sundays, days connected to the People's Market attendance, the following averages were reached: 800 people on Saturdays, 1,200 people on Sundays. On weekdays the exhibition was constantly visited by school groups, from primary schools to university students, who often adopted it as *school work*. As an example, E.S.B.A.P. chartered a special train for the Porto-Lisbon displacement of students and teachers; one of the last Saturdays there were more than a hundred children attending... painting and circulating freely. It is obvious that at least during March 1977, some of the participating artists – possibly for the first time – had the opportunity to objectively meditate on their non-isolation... Also in this regards (isolation or, ultimately disrupting the isolation) we will record the opinions of two "culture specialists":

Eduardo Prado Coelho, *Opção* 10/III/77:

"*Alternative Zero* opens for Belém a fundamental answer: to enjoy this space that is what is at hand in the possible, and make it a place of intervention, another culture, always feast.

If this is not unfeasible, it is now time to start to prove it."

Rocha de Sousa, *Opção*, 17/III/77:

"...a rare space in the Portuguese political moment: because it raises questionings mentioned before, because it resuscitates a cultural activity in dangerous recession, because it raises controversy and stimulates a critical standing, because it aims to the governmental forces the spectacle of creativity..." "...the problems of creativity have no lesser importance in the transformation of consciences, in the definition of a social project, in the concretization of the Portuguese man."

Myself,

"'For me it is too little', Maiakovsky."

The "critical perspective" was the main innovative characteristic, in our milieu, of *Alternativa Zero*. In fact, it was not really an innovation. Since the Galeria de Março (José-Augusto França) to a certain intense period of intervention by Buchholz (Rui Mário Gonçalves) or even by Quadrante (Artur Rosa) the exercise of a critic-in-the-market-practice constituted some of the best moments of the sector. Something that has been tried in the field of museums (especially ancient art: Janelas Verdes José Luís Porfírio, Soares dos Reis in Porto / Fernando Pernes) is also an exponent of an activity whose greatest flaw is to ignore itself. As for singular exhibitions expressing a responsible critical perspective, they had already happened in 72 and 74, precisely with the AICA-SNBA salons. There, together with other accomplices, as I explained in the catalog of the "exhibition of Belém", I have organized two sets entitled "From Emptiness to Pro Vocation" and "Projects-Ideas" which were decisive at least for a personal understanding of these issues. Since that time (and in almost total independence from the so-called "international vanguards") I began to consider that *producing* an exhibition could be equivalent to producing a work of art; collective, well understood, which coincides with the noblest fate of aesthetic activity ("poetry must be made by all"). Simultaneously, I was beginning to understand that jury exhibitions (the famous "salons", see catalog mentioned above) could lead to the grossest form of conservatism and promotion of mediocrity.

The difference regarding the "exhibition of Belém" is that it could become near to a rigorous operation; firstly because a process of clear conscience had already taken place, and not only in the *producer* but also in the *produced country*. It was in fact after those exhibitions that I started to exit the Portuguese *ghetto*, the only way to know (and love) the country Portugal. I was then able to study rigorously the evolution of the vanguards, or rather the vanguard; because there is only one. In short, it is inevitable to conclude

vanguard is a dialogue between different vanguards
at the bottom, a dialogue between aesthetic vanguard and the ideological vanguard (social-ethic, for example)
the vanguard and the market are processes that are intertwined, necessarily, in a society of market/consume
the artist, the author is never a simple producer
it is a produced producer and tends (in current society) to become a product-to-produce

the main producer becomes its own society with their laws of market, consume and mass communication
respective "managers", and namely critics or information specialists

in this framework we watch inexorably
an acceleration of vanguards
a development of the critical role of the artist
the aestheticization of criticism
to this we call the conceptual or analytical way
to this corresponds a responsible liberty
and a militant responsibility

the novelty of *Alternativa Zero* is that it translated unambiguously a conception: this conception: Militant, but cultural. This, as political as possible; the least partisan as possible.

Eduardo Prado Coelho, *Opção 10/III/77*:

“I also know that in this cultural militant, political lucidity is always de-dramatized, full of an immensely serene firmness.”

Rocha de Sousa, *Opção 10/III/77*:

“Ernesto de Sousa had the courage to override some recent prejudices, inviting with a clinical eye the artists who could move with some ease in all the *alternatives zero* of vanguard culture in our midst, not excluding the emigrants who went to search in other European sources (especially European) the inspiration for a new gesture concerning men and concerning the world. From this choice and due to a careful and logistical support, resulted ‘an open exhibition with all the possible consequences in this society, including to collaborate (however little) to transform it’. A previous warning text clarifies, in that sense, that the initiative involves a didactic attitude and does not intend to propose this or that esthetic current or any vanguard definition.”

This statement from the critic in *Opção* (also a painter, teacher, cultural leader, etc.) is accurate, especially when he points out the intention of a “didactic attitude”. It is also true that such an attitude precluded prior definitions of vanguard or the preference for “this or that” aesthetic current. But do not assume that there is any kind of eclecticism in this attitude. Actually, that “aesthetic perspective” was based on a strict choice, in the face of manifest products (some historical) and even some younger artists proposed (with rigor and some risk). This rigor was based on a critical-ideological background (which we will refer to later) and on a double methodological option. To know:

firstly, that the only valid didactic function or attitude in our time is of an aesthetic nature; secondly, that all the aesthetic vanguards that really deserve this name are confounded or converge to a single one that I will call the conceptual way.

That is why “in Belém” there was a “kinetic machine” (kineticism, as constructivism is one of the origins of the conceptual way) and there was a concept-forest; but there were no framed paintings or plinth-based sculptures. That is why “in Belém” there was a bio-electronic music machine, a “secretary for a society under construction”, but there were no *objects* of that lie, and repression of all *projects*, finished works, denials of freedom. Of course that practice in that exhibition would raise many problems; which strictly corresponds to their *praxis*. For example, for Clara Meneres it may be that her “Living-Earth-Woman” is a beautiful sculptural object (the meaning of forms, the hand and the disciplined eroticism) and for me, essentially a clear, renewed project...

Jorge Listopad, *Expresso*, 25/III/77:

“Clara Meneres with her tomb-woman, someone without singing (a pity), trimmed the grass from the pubis (nature doesn’t rest even while you sleep, the art-second-nature- idem) ...”

That *someone* was Clara Meneres herself, the artist. I would even consider the *project* in this way: the *artist* who is a sculptor and sculpture teacher designs murdering nature with his sense of forms (school) and this has turned into a beautiful daily struggle, exactly what is now called a *performance*.

Because of that rigor, and because of the swords of fire waiting for us East of Paradise, I assumed the role of “instrument of destiny”, according to Ângelo de Sousa; and such an instrument, which is the way of reason (there is no other, we could bet with Pascal), if necessary would separate the Father from the Son, the Husband from the Wife, Rigor or humility, as you wish.

Of course there are not only methodological options, I, a sinner-I confess, I know I have an ideology. Dark corner or alert and public scream; an intimate, minuscule, and rarely confessed experience, or tactics and strategy learned from the cultural lies like any Marquis (of Merteuil, for example); this ideology is after so many years of struggle a datum, or a fatality, as you wish. For the most part. And hence the “perspective” an honest game. Something, of course, will be held on the sleeve or body that justifies the sleeve. But that small part so sorry is only for friends. More intimate. And even those...

The proof, at last! that most of this ideology is public is that it came to public. And the astonishment oh Portuguese land that you are not as ungrateful as they say, it come to public correctly and it oh re-astonishment! With overt friendliness.

José Luís Porfírio, *Brotéria*, May/June 77:

“It becomes obvious that it is not possible to make a unitary discourse on a manifestation as differentiated as the *Alternativa* was, on each operator, their motivations, the results of their work, etc. It is also impossible or useless to take on the strength-idea of vanguard and to speak about it. However, there is a common discourse beyond the space of Belém, beyond the month of March that brought together the exhibition: a discourse, a critic-responsibility (as stated in the catalog) and above all, as for me, a mythology of vanguard as José Ernesto de Sousa proposes in his notes, studies, articles, talks, actions, complicities, with the enormous merit of not having any organization behind (and people to work...) but to be able to mobilize people and wills, to make scattered screams a possible common discourse, uniting without castrating the differences, precisely because it brings together those who in Portugal also *want* to be different.

In these last years José Ernesto has deliberately pursued, sought for Vanguard and its myths, taking a word or a gesture, unveiling intentions that escaped the ‘operators’ themselves, in a critical activity that does not exactly propose operative concepts, which does not read, because it lives and cannot do both at the same time, putting into circulation keywords or strength-ideas, conveying dreams and utopias, the flesh and blood of an artistic communication that lost or abandoned if not his body, his physical splendor at least.

I don’t know if the Living Theater is, as the experts have said, only the memory of itself, or what turns out to be the same, its own myth; what matters is to know that it came to help emphasize the myths that built their own alternative, even in

the sometimes difficult, sometimes systematic and forced communication they established or attempted to establish with the public, just as in the exhibition, myth and behavior (ritual) became a trap-game, a test for the learned to read, in a denial to discourses such as this and any and all action.”

That *Alternativa Zero* was not, nor was it intended to be just “a test for connoisseurs to read”, as proven by the abovementioned numbers.

Meanwhile, let us cite a testimony and a prophecy.

Paulo Alexandre Nunes Pereira, 13 years old, Escola Ferreira Borges:

“I have to inform you that it is the first exhibition of this kind of art that I have visited and enjoyed.” This exhibition of contemporary art is related to the way of life of all of us. It is necessary to see with a very special attention and to know how to solve the incognito they present to us. This art of creative expression, and in a somewhat imaginary way, creates and develops in us a spirit of creativity.”

The prophecy, Eduardo Prado Coelho, in the introduction to the catalog:

“Then there will come workers of those who strolled on Sundays, there will be children lost orphans of Klee and Magritte, people of no exhibition and just used to the rigor of impositions, they will come here, near you, to your constellations of signs, to feel, as the other Braque-Bach said in another life of which they were told about and that failed them. It will be high night, bonfires patched with sleep, with some laughter, with the great incomprehension they were taught down their throats, the perplexity of no one knowing for sure what all that is for, but for those who know for sure what this is for also have to work, to breast-feed, and to listen to the Opera in the S. Carlos, and to kiss a sex, and to stick labels on candy boxes, and to cry in shame and fear, who knows?”

From what I have seen, I may say it was like that: bonfires patched with sleep, misunderstandings they were thought down their throats, but also the feeling of another life they were told about and that failed them, an incognito that must be solved. But of course it was also a test for connoisseurs to read... Isn't it what we are still doing?

I would go further. In addition to being a destination, reaching the category of connoisseurs is humbly a profession, something that should ultimately contribute to a conscious creation of situations. *Alternativa Zero* was the conscious attempt to create a situation both aesthetic and didactic.

Translation: Isabel Basto

“Uma Criação Consciente de Situações: Alternativa Zero”, was first published in *Colóquio/Artes*, #34, Oct 1977.

A MEDITATIVE FLOW ON ERNESTO DE SOUSA'S CONCEPTION OF MODERNITY (AND TWO APPENDIXES ON RELATED MATTERS) JOSÉ MIRANDA JUSTO

From film director to curator, from performer or performance director to plastic artist, from art critic to philosopher of art, from poetic inventor to video-artist and photographer, José Ernesto de Sousa (1921–1988) was active in almost everything that belongs to the domain of the arts in the broadest sense of the word. He was a heterogeneous creature. And, since he invented the term “esthetic operator” to be used instead of the word “artist” (for the simple reason that “artist” designates a kind of sociological position and not a philosophical attitude towards the world), I have decided to call him – for the purposes of this text – the heterogeneous esthetic operator. What follows is a somewhat dispersive – as it had to be – set of reflections on the options that guided the heterogeneity of a life’s oeuvre and on a distinct conception of the esthetic that sustained the specificity of Ernesto de Sousa’s thought.

1. ON MODERNITY, TIME, LANGUAGE, THOUGHT AND LOVE

“Modern” was the keyword that Ernesto de Sousa frequently used to describe what interested him in art and to epitomize his own attitude towards artistic and esthetic endeavors. In his vocabulary, “modern” was applied to a wide and multifarious set of interventions that were also part of what he called the *avant-garde* – this is not strictly in the sense of being pioneering with respect to artistic action, to be ahead of the crowd so to speak, but actually much more than that: a powerful capacity of the heterogeneity of the “yous”¹ to initiate revolutionary transformations in every field of life, including art and its energetic multiplying efficiency.

For Ernesto de Sousa – who, to my knowledge, never wasted his time with, nor paid any attention to, the controversies concerning Modernism and Postmodernism

– “modern” implied a deep connection with the Other/ Others and the togetherness of a convivial action. But modern also implied an urgency and materiality that were part and parcel of an extremely broad worldview.² This worldview spread in every possible direction, absorbing all types of reality, and had a complex conception of time at its core: the future determines the present and the past. The modern always carries the future in its womb. And it is from the point of view of this future that we can grasp our present and that past that seemingly has preceded us. In other words, the point of view of the modern is the future.

This *point of view* of the modern means two things. On the one hand, the modern always looks forward; the modern is desire, and in this sense it is completely set in the perspective of the to-come, of a strange kind of unknown that, at the same time, is completely definite (because our wishes have their own objects) and absolutely indefinite (because we never dominate the contingencies of the course of events); the modern is *adventurous*. On the other hand, the modern looks back to the present and to the past; it looks back, nevertheless, with a kind of certainty that does not come from a presumed empirical knowledge, but instead from the very belief that the adventure of the future produces its own sense – its narrative, its myth – and that this sense disseminates from the future to our present and past. The modern is not nostalgic; it is, rather, the formation of a *tradition*, of an efficient and effective reading of present and past events. Ernesto de Sousa condenses these two aspects of time in a magnificent formulation: “tradition *as* adventure”³. The small word “as”, in its semantic humility, expresses the most important fact: we look back from the future with eyes full of desire, the desire for and of revolution. And an adventure is, indeed, a revolution (that is, if we imagine an adventure

as a mental, emotional and physical experience of total transformation during a long journey through unexpected and sometimes dangerous paths).

“Desire of revolution” has a twofold meaning: we desire revolution, and revolution has a desire in itself. We – perhaps the “modern esthetic operator” first – desire the transformation to come about because we will not quench our thirst for sense without it. But revolution in itself is not an object, it is a subject (comparable to artistic facts themselves that, as we shall see later in Appendix II, are also subjects) with its own activity and mode of production; and this mode of production not only emancipates desire but it also produces more desire, as Ernesto de Sousa understood so well at the time of the Portuguese revolution of 1974–76. The collective exhibition *Alternativa Zero*⁴, which Ernesto curated in 1977, was (and still is) a tremendous example of the two meanings of the “desire of revolution”. Ernesto and the artists he had chosen, and who cooperated with him, were certainly in search of a sense for their interventions as esthetic operators during a time of deep changes and wonderful promises. Nevertheless, Ernesto did not have any illusions: the “alternative” was a “zero”. That is, it was absolute desire, an absolute opening to the future. It was a beginning, but a beginning that, in spite of being a beginning, could not foresee any results; the alternative was, as I have written in another context, a mathematical non-being, a 0+ (a zero-plus)⁵, nothing but a zero, but in any case a zero that contained within itself the seeds for a step forward. Nevertheless, when we consider the topic of revolution and desire from a different angle, revolution certainly (as an experience always situated in the future) should be considered as an outburst of desire itself – it is a never-ending desire and becomes what we should call “infinite desire”. This is the point where Ernesto de Sousa encounters an extraordinarily productive concept authored by Søren Kierkegaard: the idea that the conjunction of finitude and infinitude in us is responsible for an overflow of open possibilities, which is the very existence of humans in its concreteness and effectiveness.⁶ In fact, desire (as it is infinite) not only constantly gives birth to more desire, but also manifests the most salient characteristic of life itself, of our being-in-the-world and being-for-the-world. This characteristic is the exact opposite of the Heideggerian “being-toward-death”; on the contrary, it should be understood from the Nietzschean perspective of a “saying-yes-to-life”. And this means, as it is well known, that we have attained a degree of thought where the need for an ontological “foundation” is definitely out of place. Ernesto de Sousa, as a complete outsider with respect to the senile tradition of a philosophical “foundation,” developed a way of thinking that was dialectical on the one hand, and appealed to the alterity of the Other/Others on the other. His ambition was totally convivial, and his constant reward was the common doing, the multiplying of doing, experimenting, feeling and thinking in the close company of the Others.⁷ But this ambition and this doing were not only a way of life; they were, at the same time, a way of being-in-the-world and thinking-in-the-world.

It is true, and this can be inferred from what I said before, that Ernesto was not an analytical or dual personality, in the deepest sense of these words – in the sense that there exist personalities that tend to separate the world of thought from the world of feelings or doings.

For Ernesto, those realities belonged together, and separating them would mean a dismembering similar to the Horatian “disiecta membra poetae”. But I am quite certain that he knowingly made a choice in the direction of an intellectual intervention where thought occupied a place of a crucial non-satisfaction that we have to consistently and constantly return to if we want to be able to evaluate our position in the world and the sense of our endeavors, and if we wish to meet our own self in order to be productive in all aspects of life. This was a choice of thought and of choosing himself, of choosing his own self. A few years ago I had the opportunity to shuffle through the remnants of Ernesto’s library, and I found a copy of a French translation of Kierkegaard’s *Either-Or*; in the second volume of the book, Ernesto had underlined – among other expressions where the words “choice of oneself” occur – part of the following passage:

[...] my Either/Or designates the choice by which one chooses good or evil or rules them out. Here the question is under what qualifications one will view all existence and personally live. That the person who chooses good and evil chooses the good is indeed true, but only later does this become manifest, for the esthetic is not the evil but the indifferent. And that is why I said that the ethical constitutes the choice.⁸

This is perhaps not the appropriate place for a detailed discussion of the Kierkegaardian movement from the esthetic to the ethical, which is at play in this kind of choice, and its relation to Ernesto de Sousa’s thought; I have done this elsewhere,⁹ and I will discuss a particular aspect of this relation in Appendix II. At the present moment I wish to take a different path: what is of most interest to me at this point is the relation between the choice of oneself and the choice of thought.

From Kierkegaard’s point of view, the choice of oneself is eminently ethical. This means in the first place that it is absolute, in the sense that it is not the choice of this or that but something like the choice of choice itself: “the point is not the reality of that which is chosen but the reality of choosing.”¹⁰ For the Dane, however, the ethical perspective does not exclude the esthetical one. It only underlines the relative character of the esthetical: “the esthetical [...] is excluded as the absolute, but relatively it is continually present.”¹¹ This continual presence of the esthetic is crucial for Ernesto de Sousa’s approach to the question of choice. For Ernesto does not want the ethical to have preeminence, but he also does not want to exclude the absolute from the equation; the Kierkegaardian relativity of the esthetical becomes, in Ernesto’s way of seeing things, a point of departure for establishing the absoluteness in general – that is, not only the absoluteness of the ethical, but the absoluteness we need as a horizon of expectation for our deeds and thoughts. “Towards the absolute” then becomes a kind of *mot d’ordre* that derives from the productive activity of the esthetical at the same time as it provides the full sense for this activity. But “towards” something does not mean that we have arrived at the absolute or that we can attain it in a factual way; it is a horizon, and in this regard it only means a choice – a choice of ourselves as beings who are constantly in movement. Now, this movement towards the absolute is also a choice of thinking. The meaning we are exploring here is not a kind of thinking that leads our way, but something much more productive: when we choose ourselves, and the singularity of our own movement, we choose at the very

same instant to live in that singularity. And this implies that we choose thought as the only way of constructing and facing our singularity. And this is so because the experience of singularity, being as it is a consequence of *pathos*, is nevertheless a *poiein*; and this means that it is constituted by the performative acts of our imagination in a simultaneously linguistic and thinking capacity. Thus when we choose ourselves, we choose both thought and language at the same time.

Language and thought, moreover, constitute another theme that Ernesto de Sousa addressed with great interest. Ernesto has sometimes directed attention toward this conglomerate of terms from the perspective of the visual sign, the “letter.” In my research on the topic, I could not determine with if he had been influenced by Isou and the Lettrists, but he unquestionably knew about that kind of activity and had even mentioned it en passant. What is certain is that he was in close contact with the “visual” and “concrete” poets of the 60’s and 70’s, namely, Melo e Castro and Ana Hatherly, and with the painters, performers and installation creators who worked with words, letters and other writing values in their activities, as was the case of João Vieira and António Sena, and also composers and musicians like Lopes e Silva and Maria João Serrão, who developed with Ernesto the video and performance that was presented in 1980 at the Venice Biennale with the title “A palavra e a letra” [“The word and the letter”]. What seems important in this context is the relation between these activities (concrete poetry and writing values in visual and performative arts) and two other topics: the question of modernity, which has accompanied us from the beginning of this text, and the problem of language and thought. Although indirectly, so-called concrete poetry can pave the way to the key concepts we need in order to treat this seemingly diverse set of questions.

Concrete poetry (or, as we shall see in a broader sense, “experimental poetry”), as it was practiced and theorized in the 60’s and 70’s – and also later –, was not envisaged as a kind of poetry among other forms of poetry; it was thought of as a (historical, i.e. bound in time) manifestation of a certain essence of poetry. E.M. de Melo e Castro, who drew up a theory on this practice and attitude towards poetry, wrote:

The so-called concrete Poetry tends toward the usage of the Poetical ideogram – i.e. to the fact that the meaning of the Poem depends on the position of words, letters or signs that compose it, and to the whole Poem as a graphic symbol. / Concrete Poetry is [...] the practical demonstration of the structural difference between the Poetic symbols (then each concrete Poem creates and is its own polyvalent form and meaning) and the logical symbols.¹²

In fact, what we read here can be said of all poetry regardless of the time when it makes its appearance. The passage merely points to a Structural (Saussurean) view of poetry that is combined with an accentuation of the graphic aspect of the poetical object. In another context, Castro seems to prefer the designation of experimental poetry and writes: “[...] the experimental attitude towards poetry is not a determined esthetical current, but instead a mental attitude of investigation and search, of a vital synchronism of the artist, not anymore with time, but with the means, methods and problems that society and science display and propose as typically theirs in the face of the inevitable invasion of

the future.”¹³ This clearly means that the experimental attitude (of which poetic concretism is only an example or sub-genre¹⁴) is simultaneously historic and a-historical, and maintains an antagonistic relation with the future. We might ask: how is it historic and a-historical at the same time? This is because the experimental attitude thinks of itself as iterative, i.e. as having the possibility of being present at different moments in time as an essential “mental attitude” towards the symbolic and towards the new, and exhibiting different characteristics at each moment, depending on where it is anchored in history. Furthermore, its relation with the future is – at least in part – hostile because future is seen here as a menace, the menace of the imperialism of technology. But, as the present is the future of the past, the future of our present cannot only be that menace. The future is also an unlocking of the multifarious opportunities for the iteration of the “mental attitude” of experimentalism. There will be a fight between experimentalism and technology, and the future is indeed that fight; the fact that nobody knows how the fight will end is in itself the absence of limits of the future.

Although there is no superposition, there are important intersections between this view of experimental poetry and Ernesto de Sousa’s conception of modernity and the future. In fact, for Ernesto, modernity in its primordial significance is not a historical category; modernity can happen at any time or place. It can happen in the past, present, and future, just as much as it can occur within heterogeneous forms of artistic production. For instance, there are exemplary moments of modernity in the Middle Ages as well as in the Baroque Period and the Renaissance; and the naïf artisan, working with stone, clay or wood¹⁵, can be as modern as a video-artist. For Ernesto, modernity is also an attitude, but – as we have seen – it involves a conception of the future that is more elaborated than the one we can detect in Castro. It is a kind of future that is the time of creativity, in the sense that the latter always retroacts over the past and present, and gives form and sense to all types of communal activity. This perspective takes on a hermeneutical approach, since it focuses on a reading of the past and present from the point of view of the future and of its tools. But, as it happens, it is much more than this; the future is an energetic drive – a *Trieb* –, that is both conscious and unconscious, which sets us in a perpetual and heterogeneous motion and simultaneously contributes significantly to the constitution of our unstable – dynamic, moving and performative – worldview. And this is the point where this understanding of the future manifests its connections with the problem of language and thought.

For the concrete and experimental poets, language and the “letter” are forms that are destined to put aside a traditional romantic view of poetry, based on sentimentality, and are intended to establish a materialization of meaning through the visual properties of the poem. This materialization is, in the first place, a deconstruction of meaning in the old sense, leaving now the receptor with the responsibility of constituting her own meaning for the poetical object; the production of the object becomes non-expressive in what concerns the interiority of the poet. We might ask whether subjectivity is eliminated in this process, or whether communication is fully transformed in it; but, to a certain extent, these are one and the same question. An authentic revolution in poetic communication, apart from any

autocracy of silence, would have meant abolishing not only the subjective expression of the poet but also the subjective participation of the addressee (the receptor-spectator) by giving the visual poem the role of an activity in itself – a kind of functioning that is capable of moving both *objects* (the so-called poet and the so-called reader). As I mentioned above, this is a topic that I shall address in the Appendix II; nevertheless, I feel the need to mention this here because it points directly to the limits of concrete poetry. In fact, what seems to attract Ernesto de Sousa's attention in this context is the progressive dilution of the frontiers between the arts. I quote here from a text that is precisely on Melo e Castro's activity:

[...] experimental poetry tends to outdistance from the territory [*sic*] and it nears the visual arts, and in certain cases theatre and music. Besides, this approximation is part of a wider movement characterized by the dilution of borders between the different esthetic disciplines and by the general approximation of art and life. 'I am only interested in what is between art and life' (Rauschenberg).¹⁶

If we take Ernesto's quotation of Rauschenberg seriously, we will have to underline the word "between": the dilution of borders among the arts goes in the direction of a "between", which is the workspace for the abolishment of the opposition of art and life. This space is generated by the arts themselves in that they have engaged in a tendency toward fusion. The approximation of art to life is a result of an engagement on behalf of the arts, not of an initiative from the side of life.

But the decisive aspect in this state of affairs seems to be what Ernesto later calls a "danger" where words (that is, language itself) are set:

This poetry tends to do without reading, if not to oppose it, at least traditional reading; we could say: indifferent. This means that reading becomes an esthetic operation itself, having therefore to institute itself with new codes, constantly renewable: adventure, continent to discover. Or then (the case of phonetic poetry), pure sonority, irreducible to pre-conceived systems. One can say, in general, the words themselves are in danger. Also freedom can be exerted on them. Not only, as before, in their semantic consistency, but also in their physical and operational existence."¹⁷

In what sense are words in danger? Not in the sense of the technological menace of the future, which we have detected in Castro's argumentation. It is, rather, in the sense of the perspective of a total – revolutionary – renewal of our diverse linguistic-phonetic instruments, those poor instruments that in their current crystallization can only force us into a cage of complete submission, to repeated inertia and immobility, without any differentiating element that can be thought of as the future – that is, the kind of future I have tried to characterize in Ernesto de Sousa's approach. For such a renewal, Ernesto thinks of examples that I enumerate here in the order he uses them in the same text I have been quoting from: Tzara, Mallarmé, Apollinaire, Roy Hart, Jiri Kolár, Marcel Broodthaers, Marc Bense, Fluxus.¹⁸

This renewal of language itself, and the conception of the static and unproductive state of language in the present, involves a theoretical view of the relations between language and thought. For Ernesto de Sousa, reflection on these relations necessarily has to begin with the category of silence, with a capacity of listening to silence. In a text published in 1968 entitled "Oralidade,

o futuro da arte?" [The vocal, the future of art?¹⁹] – also contained in the eponymous anthology mentioned above²⁰ –, Ernesto quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty: "Our view of man [...] will remain superficial as long as we do not go back to that origin, as long as we do not re-find, under the noise of words, the primordial silence, as long as we do not describe the gesture that tears this silence. The word is a gesture and its signification is a world."²¹ Although Ernesto's comments on this passage²² insist on the role of art as a means of tearing silence and the consequent vocal preeminence of modern art, I am quite certain that he did not fail to notice the implications of Merleau-Ponty's observation from the point of view of the philosophy of language – the same text also quotes Jean Paulhan and Henri Lefebvre, and pays special attention to the topic of communication. It is in this sense that I will try to re-construct a systematic view of language and thought that departs from the topic of silence.

Merleau-Ponty identifies the "primordial silence" – or the tearing of silence – with an "origin". But it is important, right from the get-go, to avoid the common mistaken notion of an origin of language as the passage from its non-existence to its presence. The origin is something entirely different here. It means the most original feature of the object one is dealing with, in this case language. The origin of language is precisely what turns language into language, the being-language of language. This is to say that the origin of language can be present in language at any time, provided that that feature – or radical being – has not been effaced or marginalized. Now, what is this most original being of language? Upon adopting a functional and pragmatic perspective – instead of a strict ontological one –, one could say that the most inner functionality of language is found in its creative and constitutive character, in its poetic productivity, in its capacity of presenting (and activating) the non-present. This means that the inner core of language has a power to de-construct the already-said (and already-thought) and to construct the new, the unheard of, with and upon the fragments that result from that de-construct. This point of view implies a conception of the intimate relations between passivity and activity; if we did not have a sensibility (a *pathos*) that was receptive to all the efficiency of the outside world, we would not build up and activate the non-existent and turn it into the existential forms of experience. *Pathos* and *poiein*, as contradictory as they may seem, emerge here in their full complementarity, and language is the playground and the revelation of this convergence. Now, silence is a way to refer to the unshackling of this revelation in that the tearing mentioned by Merleau-Ponty (and adopted by Ernesto de Sousa) indicates precisely the eruptive moment of passivity and activity in the deepest interiority of language from an a-chronic point of view. Silence does not precede language in time; on the contrary, it is a strictly conceptual pre-condition of the tearing, and in this sense it is a way of insisting on the fact that the creative (or, poetic) function of language is characterized by a breakthrough. The creative and constitutive being of language is an eruptive fact that happens out of the nothing – i.e. "primordial silence" – of non-existence; it is an energy (a "force", in Leibniz's vocabulary) that is generated out of itself and is only determined by its teleological horizon, which is to say (in our terms) by its future.

Thought, in its most rigorous determination, is nothing but the full realization – or one of the fullest realizations – of this creative outburst. Ernesto de Sousa frequently calls it "reason"; and this, apart from the established philosophical terminology, makes sense to a certain degree, since the etymology of the word *ratio* also points to our faculties of intelligence, judgment, and argumentation, and moreover, because reason can be considered the most acute, deepest, and most penetrating form of thought. When the Latin thinkers spoke of "ratio et oratio", they knew that reason and language were completely entwined and that the most extreme deepness of thought had to be considered in light of its kinship with the most creative forms of speech. In fact, reason can be seen as the end of language itself. And this means two important things in this context: first, that language tends to reason even when it is poetic; second, that reason, being necessarily the reason of several creatures – and not of an isolated creature –, communicates, and it does so *in* language. Ernesto de Sousa firmly stresses this last point, and it seems quite clear that he thoroughly understands that communication does not deal with previously established meanings. On the contrary, communication creates forms and meanings in language, and develops its creative capacities by the fact that it exists as experience and speech act. But the first aspect that I have mentioned also deserves some attention: if the instance of the pre-linguistic (the outskirts of silence) is pre-formative of certain occurrences of thought that should not be forgotten – namely, because they play an important role in art for example – it is nonetheless true that such pre-formative forms (the contradictory repetition of the root "form" is intentional here) necessarily tend to be developed in more complex forms of language and consequently of thought; but this development does not efface the poetic potential the pre-formative forms are endowed with. Much to the contrary, it conserves this potential in all its effectiveness and even elevates it to a higher degree.

Now, thought – specifically in its most advanced form, which is reason – reveals itself here not only at the levels of knowledge and esthetics, but also at the level of an ethical conception of the creative processes in art.²³ This had to be so in Ernesto de Sousa's approach, since ethics begins for him exactly where the you – in its dialogical relation with the I – emerges. The insistence on the communicative processes of modernity, and the transformational strength associated with it, has to mean that an imperative of thought exists as a choice that is deeply associated with the dialogical moment. This is because an imperative, contrary to many traditional views of ethics, is always a fact of communication. And the imperative of thought, instead of being a solipsist product of a dumb conscience, is the most original manifestation of language in its productive way of being. But what is this imperative of thought exactly? On the one hand, it is the force – immanent in language processes – that pushes us to expand and transform our worldview in connection (in conflict and in agreement) with the Other. On the other hand, it is the very existence of modernity in its radical rooting in the future, that is, in its ethical obligation to transform the present and the past from the perspective and activity of a future whose simultaneous plenitude and openness impose themselves as unavoidable impulses towards action, thought and love.

I wish to finish the first section of these reflections precisely with an invocation of love in Ernesto de Sousa's work. Love – love between beings and between bodies – is the utmost manifestation of communication, or better, it is the existence of communication in its deepest and most creative form. In a brilliant text named "Olympia: fragments of a lover's discourse of mine", Ernesto, in connection with more predictable uses of the word "wireless", speaks of a "wireless love",²⁴ a love that is, so to speak, without transmitting cables, without the necessity of a receptive material connection. The expression is extremely condensed, but it is nevertheless rich in its transparency. The idea that there is a kind of love that does not need other transmitting artifacts besides love itself – in its existential transmission – is already an affirmation of the exceptionality of love in the frame of communicational relations. But such an exceptional aspect does not mean that love is a particular instance of communication; on the contrary, it indicates the singularity and originality of the loving experience among other inter-subjective affections and communicative relations. Originality, as we have seen, means the most characteristic feature of a phenomenon or group of phenomena – what others would call an essence, which is an expression that I expressly avoid. As for singularity, it denotes, in my vocabulary, a kind of deflective experience – I am considering here the deflection in our previous progression caused by the opposition of an obstacle rising before our course of thought, esthetic options or affective inclinations – that, contrary to the muteness of particularity, is exceptionally communicative and creative, and clears the way for the kind of jump that can place us in the territory of universality.²⁵

The singularity of love deserves closer observation. In the first place, the singularity of love is eminently esthetic, in the double sense that it is a crucial part of our sensible experiences and that it is, nonetheless, an experience of communion with the Other oriented towards the beautiful and the sublime. The fact that it is sensible does not mean that thought (or reason) is completely out of its domain, but that sensibility is the motor that can orient love to the higher levels where the sensible and thought join together in our faculty of judgment, as Kant would say. To determine the experience as a communion seems obvious when we consider what we have said about the place of love in the territory of communication; the most extreme form of communication is a melding together of the I and the Other into one and the same entity, superseding or abrogating the very duality of communication. And that it is oriented towards the beautiful and the sublime merely expresses love's intense desire for perfection and its extraordinary capacity for contemplating – and manipulating – the immense and incommensurable, be it manifest in nature or in art.

Being esthetic, love and its experience attain a maximum of existential reality in the togetherness of the esthetic operation and in the fusion of the bodies that such operative processes – perhaps more than anything else – can attain. In an article entitled "A (modern) Portuguese scene: or an essay for a love's cannibalism", published in 1981, Ernesto de Sousa writes: "I will be always the starting or re-starting of a dialogue. For, if we believe – with Raul Brandão – that 'the stone will still give flowers', how are we not to believe that from this *giving body* Your body will not also come to us in exchange: MY BODY IS YOUR BODY, YOUR BODY IS MY

BODY.”²⁶ The expression “love’s cannibalism” (or perhaps better, in spite of the ambiguity, “a cannibalism of love”) contained in the text’s title can elucidate the ritual connotation of Ernesto’s attitude towards the fusion that I mentioned; moreover, it also recommends further readings of this context: primitivism or archaism, incorporation, deglutition and digestion, transformation, renewal, materiality and spirituality – all of these are extensions of the concepts of cannibalism and fusion that could be of interest for the treatment of the statement “my body is your body”. For reasons of brevity, I will have to leave these to the side in order to concentrate for a moment on one topic that seems unavoidable at this point: the question of the relation between cannibalism and dialogue. In fact, cannibalism in this case seems to be a kind of horizon of dialogue – that is, where dialogue has the total absorption of the you by the I, and of the I by the you, as its distant, but nevertheless efficient, goal. This is a way of mentioning the total suppression of difference without really speaking about it. Or, to put it in a different way, of being able to simultaneously think the suppression of difference and its perennial presence (something like the Derridian writing *sous rature* – under erasure –, that allows for simultaneities of thought that have their precedent in Hegel’s *Aufhebung*, which means the simultaneous abolishment and conservation of a concept). What I believe is important here is the fact that difference (and dialogue) subsists alongside its own death, and this is possible – once again – because we maintain a specific conception of time that underlies and subtends the distinction between subsistence and death. Earlier we saw the importance of the future in Ernesto de Sousa’s understanding of time and now we must inevitably add another category to this understanding: the moment or the instant. The moment is precisely what – in the course of time – suspends the course of time. In our case, this means that in the course of the future time (which is the time of modernity), as well as in the present and in the past (determined by the future), there are iterative suspensions in which we think and act – that is, in which we live – as if the horizon we inevitably lean toward had neither meaning nor existence. We are in the course of time, but – by means of a mysterious eclipse of time – there are moments that are only *moments*, which is to say that they not only seem to be out of time but that they *are* out of time: of course, moments of love and the moments of esthetic experience are good examples of this suspension. Now, this instantaneous experience of a time out of time allows for an existential consideration of difference (and dialogue) in that it summons up another concept we are still lacking: repetition.²⁷ Repetition and the moment are inseparable from the point of view of a generalized conception of time; repetition – not in the trivial sense of a repetition of the exact same, but as the occurrence of a kind of sameness that contains small differences (which we can understand in the sense of Leibniz’s “small perceptions”) – in spite of taking place in time, demands a suspension of time in order to be apprehended precisely as repetition; without this suspension it would be captured either as mere repetition without the element of difference or as in-difference in the weakest sense of the term, i.e. as the total absorption of the events in the massive flow of time, where the very repetition would not take place. Once we have arrived here, we can understand that it is precisely repetition – and the fact that it contains the seeds of

difference in itself – that establishes the connection between the moment and difference. The moment is the very existence of difference, whereas time in general, without the moment, would only be the spectrum of death and the menace of the end of time.

Ernesto de Sousa clearly put aside the Hegelian – or post-Hegelian – concepts of the end of art, and the end of history or, even with more reason, the end of time. For him, the horizon of the total absorption of the you by the I and of the I by the you – in other words, the horizon of dialogue – was not the end of difference; it was a moving horizon, moving further and further away from us as we proceed on our own path in time. And time, in this sense, is exactly the possibility of the heterogeneity of the moments, the possibility of repetition, and consequently the constant possibility of the eruption of the different. The fusion is total, this is the splendor of love, but it is exceptional – it is a fact of the order of the moment. But then again, it is not perennially total in that the other instantaneity, the one of the different, is always in the vicinity, ready to be lived, ready to be enjoyed. The dialogue is a never-ending reality, only interrupted in the brief instants when the complementarity of the bodies – and of the souls – becomes total union, absolute luminosity. Total luminosity obviously blinds the difference, but the difference pushes its way through the absolute light to establish the equilibrium between light and shadow, of which Nietzsche – quoting Johann Georg Hamann – spoke in an early notebook.²⁸

2. APPENDIX I – ON HETEROGENEITY

Earlier, I mentioned Ernesto de Sousa’s heterogeneous intervention in the field of what he called the esthetic. I would like to be more explicit on the theme of heterogeneity, since this can shed some light on Ernesto’s attitude and praxis.

I think that, in philosophical terms, heterogeneity has to be distinguished from diversity and multiplicity. These three are modalities (or sub-categories) of difference, but – as I shall argue here – heterogeneity is the most productive of all of them, namely in the territory of esthetic creation and the efficiency of thought connected with it. Let us begin with the simplest modality, which is diversity. Diversity can be detected along one single progressive line; on one and the same line we can determine different segments with varying lengths, as we can determine different points that have diverse positions and consequently different relative meanings, participation, or compositional effects. The result of diversity, however, is always limited by the circumstances of the horizontal plane where the line is traced. As for multiplicity, it is obvious that one single line on one single plane would not be able to give an account of its specificity; multiplicity is richer in the sense that it can be thought about as existing in the topological relations between at least two lines, each occupying its own place on a proper plane. The points on these two or more lines are differential in the sense that they belong to different planes and necessarily comprise a set of characteristics that largely exceed the confinement of diversity. The different planes have stable relations between each other, however, with the consequence that the multiplicity always exists within a delimited space of possibilities. From the point of view of an esthetic intervention, the example of an attitude of multiplicity

would be that of an operator who works simultaneously in different directions, but always maintains an endo-centric homology of the different works she produces.

Now we come to heterogeneity. Here difference attains its most productive level. In fact, heterogeneity cannot be approached with the instruments of Euclidian geometry. It presupposes an outburst, an explosion that destructs the sameness of the same, on the one hand and, on the other hand opens access to an infinite set of divergent possibilities spread out in every direction. An esthetic operator who attains the level of heterogeneity has paved the way for the most intense and most productive efficiency of time; since she has transposed the barriers of the reduction of the oeuvre to a common essence or centripetal reduction of the works, she has also left behind the limiting conception of time that reifies the present, and she has embraced all the infinity of the future.

The etymology of the word “heterogeneity” can be of interest in this context. Although the word comes from Medieval Latin, it was formed on the basis of two Greek roots: *heteros*, meaning “different” or “the other”, and *genos*, meaning “kind” or “gender”, but descending from an older root, *gene-*, that meant “to give birth”, “to beget”. Etymologically, the word “heterogeneity” therefore expresses “to give birth to the different” or “to the other”. Now, if we agree that to give birth signifies to create something that did not exist before the creation, we can come to the conclusion that the meaning of heterogeneity is something like “to create the absolute otherness of the Other”. But the absolute otherness is necessarily the otherness of the uncountable many, of the *Others* instead of the single Other. This means that when we talk about heterogeneity, we are really talking about a potentially infinite number of entities in their radical difference. These entities, in the case of art, are the works. And the works, as we shall see in the second appendix, are not only what is created by the artist; they are, above all, what creates us as esthetic beings, as esthetic operators and as receptors of art. Now, this is of superlative importance in this context: heterogeneity is, therefore, much more than a simple multiplication of the different paths the artist can follow; it is, indeed, the creation of the diverse, which is authored by the works themselves. It is the giving birth to the radical otherness by the very materiality of the works’ life, thus providing the origin for the total fragmentation of the creative artist and of the receptive person. At this point we arrive at the spot where heterogeneity splits in two: the heterogeneity of the works and the heterogeneity of the personalities who deal with art, those who execute and those who receive. And – since this splitting is actual and unceasing due to its infinite nature – this indicates that heterogeneity is heterogeneous in itself.

Ernesto de Sousa used the expression “a self-aware creation of situations”²⁹. It is doubtful that this expression is taken from Guy Debord and the Situationist International, as one might imagine at first glance. The fact that Ernesto uses the adjective “self-aware” seems to point in a different direction. It is quite possible that it has much more to do with what we have called Ernesto’s tendency to elaborate on thought and reason than with any Situationist “event’s play”.³⁰ In any case, what holds my interest in a more substantial way in this context is the proliferation of the directions of action that are presupposed in the “creation of situations”. This creation obviously implies the heterogeneity of the

“situations”, which are creative themselves. Without this heterogeneity, the situations would be a mere set of successive circumstances deprived of the kind of power that we have described above. The situations Ernesto talks about are creative in the sense that they are endowed with a generative force that flows out of the fact that they consist of the productive efficiency of the future. This is precisely the point where heterogeneity and Ernesto’s conception of the future meet, and where one can catch a glimpse of the fact that the so-called situations are exactly what create us as creative human beings, as the esthetic operators that we can all be at any given moment.

3. APPENDIX II – FOR A NEW CONCEPTION OF THE SUBJECT

If the situations create us out of the future it is because, in a certain sense, they have become the subjects that determine and guide our actions. When we consider this case, we might ask: But what about our autonomy? Are we condemned to play the role of mere objects living under the rules of a total determinism? These questions have to be addressed later, at the end of a more detailed discussion of this topic, but they have to be kept in mind in the course of this reasoning. I find this is the case because Ernesto de Sousa never doubted the high value of human autonomy and never seemed to be bewitched by the temptation of determinism.

My thesis is not only that the situations become subjects, but also the very works (of art) are to be envisaged as subjects in their way of existing, functioning, and acting. As far as the situations are concerned, we have seen that they are simultaneously created and creative; but that they are creative largely exceeds the fact that they are created, in the sense that the creativity of the situations generates our own powers of doing and acting. We can say that the very self-awareness that is at stake here is the one of the situations themselves in their communal heterogeneity, since the infiniteness of their form of existence issues its effects to human beings with a kind of self-presence that is entirely dependent on the future.

In the case of works of art, things are substantially different (in spite of a relationship with the future that I shall address later). In order to envisage the works as subjects, it is necessary to admit that they are endowed with a working force – a mode of functioning that is specific to each one of them. Works of art are living creatures constituted of different parts (however tiny they may be) that maintain active relations between themselves. And those relations are responsible for dislocations that are relatively independent of the artist or the receiver; such movements subsist on themselves, otherwise they would cease to exist when the viewer turns her back on the works. The works’ movements act upon us. This action not only determines – at least partially – our view of each work –, but it also imposes itself as the autonomous being of each work. From this point of view, the work is endowed with a subjectivity that establishes a relationship with us. But here the question is: how can we characterize this relationship? If we keep our approach within the scope of Ernesto de Sousa’s broad conception of modernity, the key to understanding the relation between the work and the viewer – who can be the creator or the receiver – must reside in “esthetic indifference”, a concept that goes back to both

Kierkegaard and Duchamp, where in the latter it has a more useful significance for the present context.

I quote from the introductory text to “Zero Alternative”, where Ernesto de Sousa brings Kierkegaard and Duchamp together:

Thus spoke also, already in the first half of the 19th century, the Dane Kierkegaard who all along his whole oeuvre sets, in an entirely nowadays vision, the decisive problem of the relations between esthetics and ethics: ‘for esthetics is not the evil, but indifference...’ and ‘ethics corresponds to the choice’. By proposing a state of equilibrium (‘ou bien... ou bien’) between esthetics and ethics, he responsibly defines the total freedom of existing: ‘I was born by the fact of having chosen myself.’ Here esthetics and ethics equilibrate dialectically. The consciousness of the necessity of choice is precisely what would be proposed later by Duchamp, side-by-side with esthetic indifference; *ready-made*, total perceptive indifference, entirely assumed anxiety of existing, pertinence of freedom.”³¹

We have discussed some of the implications of the Kierkegaardian choice earlier, namely for the topic of thought. Now it is time to discuss the topic of esthetic indifference in Kierkegaard and its relation to Duchamp’s attitude, in order to answer the question of the relation between the work as subject and viewer.

Esthetic indifference in Kierkegaardian terms is a manner of designating the counterpart of the type of difference posited at the level of ethics. Ethics differentiates in that it chooses the choice itself, as we have discussed above. For Kierkegaard, the ethical difference is not to be confused with the difference that results from repetition. The latter is esthetic in that it manifests its direct link with sensibility. But at this point we have to be alert to the connection between esthetic difference and esthetic indifference. In fact, esthetic indifference is to be thought of at a higher level than the one of difference; in Kierkegaard’s view, indifference points directly to a stadium of life in which the sensible difference exists but is not sufficient to illuminate the dimension of choice, and subsequently of infinity. Indifference is thus an attitude in life, which creates situations appropriate for pleasure or displeasure, but manifests the incapacity for a resolution in the direction of the ethical (and the religious, which is a dimension that will always concern the Dane, but that I will not treat here). In this sense, the concept of esthetic indifference is, nonetheless, a preliminary but important step towards an understanding of the work as subject, since it implies that man – or the viewer, for that matter – stays in a state of expectation, waiting for life to act and actively proportionate the occasions of pleasure and displeasure that can give rise to the creation of situations; life is no longer a set of objectual entities, but instead a world of subjective actions.

In Duchamp we will find a concept of esthetic indifference that, to a certain extent, can be said to develop and enlarge Kierkegaard’s position. In 1961, in a talk delivered at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Duchamp said: “A point which I want very much to establish is that the choice of these ‘readymades’ was never dictated by esthetic delectation. / This choice was based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste... in fact a complete anesthesia.”³² At first glance, the choice here appears at the level of the works themselves, and in this sense it seems not to be ethical. But it is also not

esthetic, since Duchamp decidedly nullifies the idea that esthetic delectation, as well as taste, can be part of the process. Now, this is the first aspect we should underline: if esthetic delectation plays no role in the process, neither from the angle of the producer, nor from the one of the receiver, then the artistic object is no longer a mere object, in the sense that it does not occupy a merely passive place in the hands of the artist nor in the eyes of the public. But if it is not a mere – strictly passive – object, then it offers itself up in a certain kind of action for the viewer: the artist and the receiver are moved – and determined – by the supposed object, which ceases to be a simple object and becomes a subject in its relation with humans – who, in turn, become the objects of the action. This means, among other things, that the work itself is also the subject of the choice; the object chooses its vehicle – the so-called artist – and its destination – the public. Now, as strange as this may seem, this choice is absolutely ethical; it is ethics in its utmost manifestation in the sense that it is completely deprived of emotional content and of sensible form, but nonetheless is fully inscribed in a relation with the Others of a dialogue, who are the chosen ones.

This is the point where we can understand not only the role of the work of art in its relationship with us as viewers, but also comprehend our own role in the process. The work is the subject in that it functions by itself and exerts its action upon us. In this sense, we are objects of the work. But, when we look at it from a different angle, we are the Others of the work, which means that we address the work as much as it addresses us; we retro-act on the work, and, from this point of view, we are still subjects. The important aspect here is that we are no longer the subjects that we used to be when seen from the old perspective; we are indeed different subjects, subjects who are simultaneously objects, and who cannot forget this condition anymore, because this simultaneous form of being is precisely the one of modernity and consequently the one of the future (in the sense that I have outlined above). Our autonomy and freedom are not wounded in their heart, and the work of art does not fully determine our lives, but the fact that we are not only subjects, but also objects of the works, clearly tells us that we are not alone and that we are deeply engaged in a dialogue (of equality) with the inhabitants of the kingdom of esthetic entities. Let me only say at the end of these reflections, that I understand this vision of the work of art as a subject in a dialogue with us, viewers and producers, as a complement to Ernesto de Sousa’s thought, and that this complement is entirely determined by the richness of his perspectives.

Lisbon, November 2017

- 1 See Ernesto de Sousa, Ser moderno... em Portugal [Being modern... in Portugal], Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, 1998 (eds. Isabel Alves and José Miranda Justo), in particular the text “A vanguarda está em Coimbra / A vanguarda está em ti” [The avant-garde is at Coimbra / The avant-garde is in you], pp. 241-242.
- 2 I quote from Ernesto de Sousa, Oralidade, futuro da arte? e outros textos, 1953-87 [The vocal, the future of art? and other texts, 1953-87], São Paulo: Escrituras Editora, 2011 (ed. by Isabel Alves), p. 19: “Attention, today and here, attention to modernity. Modernity is the art for the mouth of which we are needed.” (All translations from Portuguese are mine, J.M.J.)
- 3 See Ser moderno... em Portugal, op. cit., pp. 221-225 (my italic).
- 4 See the catalog Alternativa Zero, Tendências Polémicas na Arte Portuguesa Contemporânea [Zero Alternative, Polemical Tendencies in Portuguese Contemporary Art], Lisbon: Secretaria de Estado da Cultura, 1977 (see also the catalog of the exhibition’s remake twenty years later at the Museum of Serralves, in Oporto: Perspectiva: Alternativa Zero [Perspective: Zero Alternative], catalog coordinated by João Fernandes and Maria Ramos, Porto 1997); cf. also the presentation text of the exhibition (which indeed was not only a deep reflection on the future and present state of the arts in Portugal and abroad, but also a philosophical assumption of the main coordinates of Ernesto’s esthetic thinking) in Ser moderno... em Portugal, op. cit., pp. 67-77.
- 5 José Miranda Justo, “‘O fim do fim do mundo’ ou depois da tautologia” [‘The end of the end of the world’ or after tautology], appendix to Ernesto de Sousa, Ser moderno... em Portugal, op. cit., pp. 293-305, in particular p. 294.
- 6 See S. Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments, translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1992, vol. I, pp. 92-93, vol. II, p. 35.
- 7 See Ser moderno... em Portugal, op. cit., for example, “Há tanta gente, Mariana” [There are so many people, Mariana], pp. 23-26, “O estado zero. Encontro com Joseph Beuys” [The zero state. Meeting Joseph Beuys], pp. 27-38, and the group of texts under the general designation of Uma criação consciente de situações [A self-aware creation of situations], pp. 221-251.
- 8 Although Ernesto de Sousa used a French translation, I quote from the English translation of Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong: S. Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Part II, Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 169. The French translation, however, instead of “the esthetic” and “the ethic” uses “l’esthétique” and “l’éthique”,

- 9 converting the nominalized adjectives in the designations of branches of philosophy; this fact conducted Ernesto de Sousa to a somewhat incorrect translation when he quotes the Kierkegaardian passage; nevertheless, such wrong translation does not seem to affect his fundamental interpretation of the passage at stake.
- 10 See José Miranda Justo, “Espessuras do pensar. Ernesto de Sousa e o círculo de Kierkegaard” [Thicknesses of thinking. Ernesto de Sousa and Kierkegaard’s circle], in the catalog Ernesto de Sousa | Revolution my body, Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1998, pp. 25-37.
- 11 S. Kierkegaard, op. cit., p. 176.
- 12 Ibid., p. 177.
- 13 The author used to spell his name with only one “l”: Melo; Ernesto de Sousa, however, uses a double “l” when writing the author’s name: Mello. E. M. de Melo e Castro, A Proposição 2.01 poesia experimental [Proposition 2.01 experimental poetry], Lisboa: Editora Ulisseia, 1965, pp. 94-95.
- 14 Id., p. 57.
- 15 See id., pp. 59-61, where Castro establishes eight different modes of experimental poetry.
- 16 See, for instance, the text “Um escultor ingénuo” [A naïf sculptor], in Ser moderno... em Portugal, op. cit., pp. 99-107.
- 17 Ser moderno... em Portugal, op. cit., pp. 194-195, in a text named: “Mello e Castro, da visão ao tacto e ao convívio” [Mello e Castro, from vision to touch and togetherness].
- 18 Id., pp. 195-196.
- 19 Id., p. 196.
- 20 The translation of this text’s title is difficult. In Portuguese, the term “oralidade” means the opposite of the written word, the vocal character of speech in opposition to the muteness of written signs, whereas in English the word “orality” would predominantly suggest a relation to the mouth, as in the psychoanalytic opposition between the oral and the anal. In order to avoid confusion, I decided to use the term “the vocal”, which – in my opinion – approximately denotes what the author meant.
- 21 Oralidade, futuro da arte?, op. cit., pp. 23-42.
- 22 Id., p. 30; Ernesto de Sousa quotes from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phénoménologie de la perception, Paris: Gallimard, 1945, p. 214.
- 23 Id., pp. 30 and 34-35.
- 24 Ernesto de Sousa writes: “The esthetic is directly ethical.” Oralidade, futuro da arte?, op. cit., p. 294.
- 25 In id., p. 291.
- 26 For a more extensive exposition on these topics see José Miranda Justo, “Aesthetic Experience and Artistic Creativity: Knowledge, Affects, Imagination and Language”, in Creative Processes in Art. Proceedings of the International Colloquium (Lisbon 12-13 September 2013), edited by

Ana Rita Ferreira and Ana Nolasco, Lisbon: CIEBA – Artistic Studies Research Center, FB-AUL, 2014, pp. 25-40, especially pp. 25-30: http://www.belasartes.ulisboa.pt/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/P_2014_CREATIVEPROCESSESINART.pdf (accessed 26.11.2017).

Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 141-142. See https://monoskop.org/images/a/a9/Duchamp_Marcel_The_Essential_Writings_of_Marcel_Duchamp.pdf (accessed on 24.11.2017).

- 26 Translated from “Uma cena (moderna) portuguesa: ou uma tentativa para um canibalismo de amor”, in Oralidade, futuro da arte?, op. cit., p. 295 (E.S.’s italics and capitals). On Ernesto de Sousa’s official website, we can read the following information: “YOUR BODY IS MY BODY is a designation created by Ernesto de Sousa to reunite a series of actions, performances and exhibitions. This cycle includes graphic, photographic and filmic production, poetical texts and mixed-media works created between 1972 and 1988, among which were *Luiz Vaz 73*, *Revolution My Body nr. 2*, *Tu Cuerpo Es Mi Cuerpo / Mi Cuerpo Es Tu Cuerpo*, *Identificación Con Tu Cuerpo*, *Olympia*, *Tradição como Aventura*.” <http://www.ernestodesousa.com/proyectos/o-teu-corpo-e-o-meu-corpo> (accessed on 15.11.2017).
- 27 On repetition see S. Kierkegaard, Repetition, in S. Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling / Repetition, English translation by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1983, pp. 125 and ff.
- 28 “[W]ie Hamann sagt: ‘Deutlichkeit ist die richtige Vertheilung von Licht und Schatten’”, (“as Hamann says: ‘clarity is the right distribution of light and shadow’”), “Darstellung der antiken Rhetorik” (Description of ancient rhetoric), in Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language, edited and translated with a critical introduction by Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair and David J. Parent, New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 40-41.
- 29 Ernesto de Sousa, “Uma criação consciente de situações. ALTERNATIVA ZERO” [A self-aware creation of situations. ZERO ALTERNATIVE], in Ser moderno... em Portugal, op. cit., pp. 227-239.
- 30 I quote from the list of “Definitions” published in Internationale Situationiste, n.º 1, June 1958: “constructed situation – moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitarian ambiance and of an event’s play.”
- 31 See Ernesto de Sousa, “Alternativa Zero”, in E. S., Ser moderno... em Portugal, op. cit., pp. 75-76.
- 32 Marcel Duchamp, “Apropos of ‘Readymades,’” talk delivered by Duchamp as a panel member of the “Art of Assemblage” symposium at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 19 October 1961. Published in Art and Artists (July 1966), 47, and reprinted in Salt Seller. The Writings of Marcel Duchamp, eds. Michel

GRAPHIC ARTS, VEHICLE OF INTIMACY ERNESTO DE SOUSA

What is an orange? Suppose I have to make *someone* understand what an orange is; and, imperatively, what an orange is to *me*. Obviously, I can do two kinds of things, which are different but happen to be complementary and reciprocal.

I can offer this someone the *experience* of the orange. I can *explain to them* what the orange is.

The terms of that experience, however, can be different and their limits varied: did I buy the orange or pick it in an orchard? Did I or did I not demonstrate how to peel it? There are an infinite number of things that an orange can be, in terms of experience. On the other hand, what would I have said to explain what the orange is, limited, of course, by what I know myself? That it is the fruit of a certain species of tree; from such and such a botanical family. That it contains vitamin C, that it is picked at a particular time of year, in specific regions. Its economic or cultural importance... Essentially, the truth is that with these two processes I would not have been able to relate or offer the experience of everything that an orange is to *me*. Orange tea, orange blossom, the oranges in a certain painting by Manet, and the white-painted oranges in Antonioni’s latest film, these, for me, are also *the orange*. We can say however, in an initial approach to this question, that a lengthy common experience and an intricate network of mutual knowledge related to that object would lead me or anyone else to that which Sartre evocatively called an *empirical plenitude*, and to a possibility of common action, a common rhythm. At a certain point I could say: *we know what an orange is*. Which is not to say, of course, that the same object cannot be approached as a determining factor of our different individualities, my own and that of the other person. Let us say that to a certain extent, the orange, our knowledge of it, its use and its economy are part of our intimacy.

As a first reference to the main theme of this brief meditation, we could say, in terms of the graphic arts, that these constitute – as we will see – a significant vehicle (through the objects of our experience and knowledge) for the promotion of my intimacy with others. We will also show that one of their particular *raisons d’être* is that they are the synthesis, or the place of synthesis (visual and literary) of an *explanation* about the objects of our knowledge and of something that suggests one’s *experience* of these objects. But knowledge also implies practical action, a capacity to act, which, more than just simple experience, completes and forms our comprehension of the real. Formed in the sense of a common perception, the graphic arts also result in a stimulus or guide for practical action. We intentionally do not refer to that by which graphic arts are most commonly known,

and which, after all, is not a necessary or sufficient term for the corresponding definition: their repetitive nature. Generally, but not necessarily, graphic artwork is expected to be reproduced in a variable number of copies, approximately or strictly equal (manual or mechanical reproduction processes). In this chapter, however, we must underline that the graphic arts, due to their richer natural inclination, do not belong to the number of arts where the executor is not the creator (such as music, for example).

However mechanical or technical the reproduction process (general printing, photogravure, heliogravure, offset, silkscreen, etc.), the creator of a work of graphic art should intervene, control, direct an entire army of technicians and operations, always leaving margin for final interpretation and creation. Naturally, this creator, who creates his own aesthetic object, is often the interpreter of other people’s creation (for example, the graphic artist who proposes to *make-into-a-book* the oeuvre of a literary author). In these cases, their function is similar and raises the same issues as those of a theatre director, who is an intermediate creator, an interpreter, as well as an original creator. We shall not discuss these problems here, despite them being of primary importance, particularly in terms of the necessary (though critical) fidelity to the work that has been previously created, and which is at the same time the end and the medium.

But we must still clarify what we understand as the fundamental definition of graphic arts. Suppose I create a picture of the bank drafts discounted (in millions of accounts) in Portuguese banks between 1855 and 1865. The difference between this picture and the graphic I will subsequently create, in which the growth of that operation as part of our economic history is represented by a continuous line in a system of Cartesian coordinates, is that in this last case, resorting to an elementary graphic process, I seek to give someone else what we shall call a perceptive understanding of the fact, of the thing in question. Now this graphic can only exist aesthetically; it has to be designed, and only then will it form the *image* that is aimed for, not just to explain but to suggest a certain thing. Once this design is accomplished, with more or less aesthetic quality, a work of graphic art will have been created (regardless of its repetition). However, if the work is destined to be repeated, it happens that the creator uses – or anticipates the use of – graphic materials and processes (in the common sense of the term: typographic, silkscreen, lithographic, etc.) until the final realisation of the standard copy, for which he is, and should be, entirely responsible. Let us return to the example of the orange.

Excluding, for obvious reasons, direct experience (which we presume is more or less achieved), the work of graphic art allows me to come to an understanding (and therefore apprehending) of what-an-orange-is via routes that are not exclusively conceptual; it allows me not just to understand but also to imagine the orange. With graphic arts, a specific working scheme of ideas is embodied by means of corresponding images, even when these are reduced, eventually, to a visualisation of what can be expressed by the word (book art, for example). This last aspect shows us the importance of the study of letters, and writing systems in general, for the understanding of graphic arts. Indeed a book, or any written page, regardless of whether it is a stimulus for reading, plays with words and conventions whose aesthetic importance only escapes us by virtue of a chain of automatisms that make reading an apparently neutral phenomenon. But reading is participating in a show, like going to the theatre or attending a sporting event: reading is an aesthetic experience. Concrete poetry, as well as its precursors (the calligraphic poems of Mallarmé, Apollinaire, Desnos, etc.), even if it had no other merit, offered the opportunity to systematically call to our attention the aesthetic nature of reading. A written page, despite the abstractions of the writing, is also and always an image – and the designation *illumination* reserved for the precious manuscripts of the Middle Ages is very significant: illuminating is painting, creating images of language.

THE IMAGE AND MOTIVATIONS

Let us take some time to analyse this word, *image*. An object – an orange – has for me certain qualities and characteristics. These qualities and characteristics fill a space and demand a time: the image is its sensitive representation; it is an appeal to that which we know of the object, it is *the presence of the absent*. In effect, these qualities and characteristics (genuinely absent) are found by suggestion, they are present in the image. But there is more. The artistic image – which is what we are fundamentally dealing with – beyond its representative (or evocative) function has its own personality, an absolute originality. The image reflects all we know about the thing that is represented, but it takes on the acute dynamism of its presence, and this presence brings it an entire past and a projection of future. The artistic image is then characterised by its immediacy and, simultaneously and contradictorily, is defined. It is in this sense that we refer to its motivations, which can be defined as concept and experience. It is precisely the analysis of these motivations that will take us to a territory opposing that of Sartre, whose study of the “understanding of the other” will lead, as has already been observed (Merleau-Ponty), to a “collective solipsism”. While we cannot carry out this analysis here, we do not want to fail to mention two concepts of modern philosophy and psychology, which have been shown to be extremely fertile for the comprehension of the graphic image and its specificity in the promotion of that which we call *intimacy* with others. All these concepts are based on Wallon’s studies on child psychology. According to these studies, it has been proven that there is a *transitivism* in children, which – for example – leads to ambiguous identification with their image in the mirror.

To the child, she is herself simultaneously in the mirror and in her own body. This transitivity, which does not disappear in adulthood and which subsists underlying the discovery of individuality (discovery of the self, the experience of *Cogito*), is the basis of the discovery that we have within us a being other than ourselves: essentially, that there is an original social being. This conclusion opposes all traditional analysis, from Rousseau (e.g. *Le Contrat social*) to Sartre (*L’Être et le néant*). “The child’s first word-phrases confront behaviours and actions which belong as much to others as to themselves.” This transitivism is preserved in adulthood, at least in the ambiguous order of feelings: “someone else and I were and maintain ourselves in a unique network of behaviours and a common flow of purposes”. This observation does not deny Sartre’s empirical plenitude: it appeals, however, to something deeper and more originally and immediately social. Let us risk – just as a hypothesis for future work – an explanation for the above mentioned nature of originality and immediacy of all images, and in particular of the artistic image. If we accept, like the phenomenologist, that “to each new image, a new world” (Bachelard), which, furthermore, does not contradict one of the basic affirmations of humanism (“man makes himself”), it seems obvious that the foundation of that originality is the social realm, understood the way we made it. Using the notion of transitivity, we will understand in a new light (getting rid of all magical or transcendental character) Bachelard’s analyses of the poetic image. “The poet does not communicate the past of his image to me, but it immediately takes root in me.” This does indeed happen, but its basis is the original social realm. Scarcely a basis, however, because there will always be something absolutely new being created: project and proposition. This transformative capacity of the new image will correspond in art, particularly graphic art, to its most intimate, richest inclination, its most noble realisation. It does not happen often, it happens only when the image is or participates in an act of appropriation of circumstances, and announces a transformation of its respective history. When the new image achieves this nobility we are faced with the fact, confirmed in one of the “Theses on Feuerbach”, “it is men who changes the circumstances”. But this proposition of the future is not arbitrary: it is also a motivation, in precisely the way in which it arises as the result of the projects of men comprehended within a certain situation.

Within the requirements of this short essay we will systemise these data, proposing the structure of a future analysis of the motivations of the graphic image – understood in the more general context of the motivations of all artistic images:

a) All artistic images fix more or less on the objective *transitivity* between me and another: they are based on the social being we are in essence. In this sense, in the origin of the graphic arts we will find the word-phrases of children (Wallon); the sign-things of pictography (Marcel Cohen); and the reciprocal participation of the “subject” with the “object” of the primitive man (Lévy-Bruhl).

b) Another order of basic motivations stems from *empirical plenitude*, through which individual subjectivity is formed, altered and reformed, in a unique and intersubjective world. This plenitude is the result of

an interlinking of conceptual schemes, of experiences and diverse language systems. The graphic arts are particularly interested in considering systems of visualising what can be expressed by words, on the one hand; and on the other, an entire indirect language manifested by means of visual expression. (In this sense, cathedrals – “bibles of the poor” –, like the sign-words of pictographs, are similar to the graphic arts.)

c) In the best of hypotheses (as we seem to have here the basis of a speculative aesthetic, a requirement for value; remember, for example, the reference to Hegel’s “infinite beauty”), the artistic image can be a creator of humanity, *make* a new world. This appetite for the future can also enter into the motivations of the artistic image. In this chapter, too, we will indicate an ambiguity that particularly affects the graphic image: it is its innovative character, not dispensing with the individual creative impulse, that frequently has a highly collective effectiveness. Graphic renewal is, as a general rule, a collective movement (precisely... like cathedrals).

d) Usually, the graphic image occurs according to a repetitive material mode. The repetition of the same image in many copies can constitute, beyond technical contingencies, profound motivation (aesthetic, anthropological, etc.).

WORDS AND GRAPHIC LANGUAGE

The first manifestations of writing are characterised by their syncretic nature, and offer, in embryonic form, all the decisions of that which we understand, in modern times, by graphic art. From there, we can study the genesis of this means of communication between the individuals of one same society; from the outset, a promoter of intimacy. Pictography (from the Latin “to paint” and the Greek “to draw”) is the first manifestation of proto-writing: it consists, in general, of a presentation of parts of speech, without breaking these down into words. These stories-without words, image-situations or signthings do not therefore link to any specific language. Occurring in highly particular societies, they are inclined towards the universalist and syncretic: more than an active operation of meaning, these sign-things are fragments of the real world and appear transitively between the thinking subject and the thing being thought of. The form is a modulation of the world, familiar with its world and simultaneously and ambiguously significant. Uncommitted to any particular language, pictography is a manifestation of the productivity of language, even in its origin. This origin definitively reveals the natural inclination of all languages: universalism and synthesis. Generally, proto-writing is made up of authentic ideograms and its function is mnemonic. The graphic arts share this tendency.

However, the conquest of an authentic universalism would have to include, dialectically speaking, the rejection of universalism. The myth of the Tower of Babel, and the vague comprehension that the word – which should serve to unite and make mankind more intimate – turned against them; that the division of humanity in populations distinguished by different forms of lan-

guage corresponds to an authentic decline, a necessary step back in the comprehension of humanity by humanity. Sign-words, writings in figurative words, occurred with the establishment of the first cities; the appearance of sign-sounds (letters) follows naturally. Alongside this evolution, all systems aimed at offering a view of what can be expressed in words arise definitively in relation to different specific languages and are analytical elaborations, demanding a profound capacity for abstraction in relation to original motivations. Despite this, when two people who speak different languages meet, they *speak* using signs, re-discovering with more or less spontaneity the sign-things of proto-writing. But the remains of a modulation of the original world are to be found, as if grasping onto simple letters, however abstract its average function. This is what the poets never stopped understanding or feeling. The famous synaesthesia proposed by Rimbaud is not merely entertainment, it corresponds, on the contrary, to a deep inquietude: “*voyelles / Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes*”.

And Alexandre O’Neill’s enjoyment when meditating graphically with orthographic signs is more than mere enjoyment: “*Will you be able / to answer everything I ask?*”.

It is at least the feeling of a necessary dialogue with the signs of our abstract understanding. It is the feeling of a lost and wished-for unity, through the forest of dry abstractions of a knowledge fragmented to the point of nausea. “*L’homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles / qui l’observent avec des regards familiers.*” Writes Baudelaire, referring next to a “(...) *unité / Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté* (...)”.

In the various sectors of development of modern societies, there are symptomatic manifestations of a return to the lost unity. The end of divisions (division of labour, manual and intellectual, division into social classes; the opposition of city and country; racial segregation, etc.) appears in isolation or organically in a society that achieves most through specialisation. This rejection of rejection would pass, therefore, from the poetic aura or from a moral or ideological militancy to the internal, functional need. In the future, solidarity would be a technique, and would correspond to an automatism made of love. Love itself would lose the alienating character of exclusivism, with which we are familiar, and would transform increasingly into that which Merleau-Ponty recognises in its earliest form: creating an expression of the original indivision with another. Meanwhile, it is in the evolution of contemporary and modern art and in certain market or commercial techniques that we can best, without deviating from our subject, appreciate this potential evolution. Before speaking of advertising, of the studies of motivations as a sales technique, the role of the mass media, etc. whose comprehension is fundamental for learning the current importance of the graphic arts – let us make a brief reference to the meaning of modern art and its corresponding aesthetic comprehension.

THE MEANING OF MODERN ART

It is not easy to attempt a general appreciation of modern art. Firstly because it is multiple. Ignorance of this aspect does not reduce to an erroneous appreciation of the circumstances in which the historic process of

the art of our time occurs: by denying its multiplicity, certain criticisms rob modern art of what seems to us to be one of its richest potentials – freedom. Now, freedom cannot mean the imposition of certain restrictions disguised as rules of false deontology: horror of the anecdote or illustration in general, of the figurative (inversely, of the nonfigurative too), of chiaroscuro or perspective, etc., these are absurd limitations that a rich comprehension of modernity does not justify. Horror is medieval. Substituting a “horror of the vacuum” for horror of the representation of the natural form signifies no advance in the progressive scale of the need for freedom. This has given place to a comedy of criticism that has unfortunately positioned itself as a trailer of fashion: today, condemning all figurative conformation on the basis of an ingenious theoretic justification of informalism, tomorrow justifying with further laborious ingenuity the new... figurativism! Does this mean that modern aesthetics should hide in a prudent eclecticism? No such thing. (We must however be prudent: a provisional eclecticism can be a lesser evil, a creative phase of confrontations and adjustments.) Is there a meaning as a whole for modern art? The difficulty is that current philosophy has not pondered aesthetic phenomena a great deal. Neither dialectic materialism nor phenomenology (nor existentialism, for example) have given aesthetics a prime position, and we must return to Hegel to find a vision of a whole linked to a vision of the world. Of course this does not happen by chance: of all the human sciences, aesthetics is arguably the most subtle and ambiguous. In a period that is all about, according to a well known formula, “eliminating philosophy by doing it”, or even in which there is no longer any sense “interpreting the world if not by transforming it”, the work of art itself should contain this direct capacity for transformation. Aesthetic meditation, faced with the failure of art in relation to this transforming task (modern art has not even managed to become part of the style of daily life), seems like any superfluous thing – which certainly does not correspond to profound reality. Hegel’s predictions on the death of Art, consecutive to the death of God and the advent of absolute knowledge, seem to find a worrying confirmation. Of course, we do not intend to establish a general theory here: merely as a working hypothesis, we admit that this death is a contradictory rebirth; that fundamental understanding of modern art corresponds to the acceptance that it has reached, in its current phase, a climax (difficult for us, experiencing it, to understand), during which a revolutionary discovery of its own specificity persistently means a need for breaking all limitations, all barriers between what aesthetics *is* and *isn’t*, between natural and manufactured objects, which, in the final analysis, are appropriated by and for mankind. “Absolute knowledge” is knowledge-in-action. Hegel could not have experienced this: a work of engineering resulting in an aesthetic object even when it is just the consequence of a mathematical appropriation of nature! Today’s society, which for the first time is experiencing poor taste (the poor taste announced by romanticism is a result of the industrial revolution and has much to do with this multiple and contradictory phase of socialisation of the production methods that are contemporary to us), will find itself in the threshold of an era in which *everything* will be aesthetic. The death of art will coincide with the discovery of art itself and the almost simultaneous discovery of its natural inclination to become the form of

all human acts: and therefore, of all human knowledge, of all human objects. As such, and as Hegel intended, thought will indeed, without ambiguity, be: the “being who thinks himself,” dialectic identification of the absolute as mediation. From this point of view we might talk about a meaning for modern art, and attempt certain discoveries and tendencies, not as restrictive rules, but as parts that clarify the whole. If we consider the agonising discovery of the subject: the lucid enhancement of chance (the “objective chance” of the surrealists); the latent conflict between abstract and concrete, figurative and non-figurative: the ambiguous nature of pictorial space, or the baroque attempt to destroy the space of certain modern sculpture – we are accounting for only some decisive stages, and limited by necessary and voluntary austerity, on the path to absolute freedom from all limits and rules. Extreme analysis and extreme division mean the extreme, an incessant need for new synthesis. It is within this panorama that the graphic arts emerge in their full importance. Because of their function, their more intimate link with practical life, it is through the graphic arts that we can make out the future, at least as a hypothesis, in which a new expressive syncretism will correspond to the “death of art; as a singular activity it is distinctly different from other human activities. (In this sense, it would be interesting to study the deep affinity of the graphic arts with the cinema, with regard to which one can also talk about “the death of art”). This affinity, which we lack the space to analyse here, is also a technical affinity. Our question is the following: how can we make out this future – the end of the production of isolated works of art, realm of absolute aesthetics – by means of *today’s* graphic arts? Before attempting to respond to this question, we must not fail to underline that we understand absolute truth as a vocation, achievable, according to the words of a materialist thinker, “in the infinite duration of human life”. Let us speak openly about absolute aesthetics, knowing beforehand that this absolute will be mediation. We can still speak of making out the infinite, which corresponding to our human scale means the stars we see, and space, which astronauts have *already* visited. Naturally, ultimately, we are... naturalists. But what will naturalism become in the age of sidereal journeys and the electronic microscope? Something very new and very old: what a surprise if we find a naturalist basis in the work of many so-called abstract or non-figurative painters, an echo of an old wall and its matter, or of a microscopic landscape? After all, we experience our own ruin. We will absorb death, and with such rigour, such beautiful austerity! However much sculpture proudly brings together the detritus of our civilisation or painting limits itself to exploring its own subject, nothing will free us from agony where it has to happen. We can imagine the future (realism?) in terms of overcoming what limits us. One cannot approach the understanding of modern aesthetics without going beyond the narrow limits of aesthetic mediation. Naturally – in human terms, the freest, richest future is, in the domain of thought, science fiction.

THE GRAPHIC ARTS AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Public relations, marketing, mass media, advertising... It is not by chance that most of the terms of the most progressive modern commerce are Anglo-Saxon; nor is it by

chance that *until now* the most developed techniques in graphic art have occurred not in the socialist countries, but in those with the most aggressive capitalism. Contradictorily, the most refined discovery of the means of mass communication and influence of collective opinion has originated in countries with increasingly fewer new things to say. On the other hand, and in a phase that can be overcome if it hasn’t been already, the countries where revolutionary morals are ingrained tend to exaggerate confidence in these morals, returning to an academic notion of duty, forgetting the power of suggestion and spontaneity. The notion of progress itself becomes evidently critical. Progress is not exclusive to a certain social system: that which, in some sectors, has complacently been called decadence may be the refinement of new techniques for comprehending human relationships, and a capacity for subtle adaptation to the micro-societies of a time that advances confusedly towards the future. Comics, cartoon strips, for example, are, in most cases, an impoverishment compared to traditional literature. But nothing guarantees that their refined adaptability to our *time* will not become a springboard for fantastic creation. One does not generally hear of the history of pre-Romantic theatre, prior to *Hernani*, for example: it would be just another example of how little novelty originates in the fripperies of high culture. The history of progress in art is more ambiguous than in any other area of history, and it is not easy to disconnect it from a corresponding study of the young science that is cultural anthropology.

What characterises the graphic arts currently is that they are a direct vehicle, if not an instrument, for a new synthesis. First and foremost: synthesis of the most diverse lines of progress. The fact that they evolve as a form serving a “commercial” content, in a context dominated by capital investment and profit fever, does not remove them from the most intimate natural inclination, the inclination of a human content of “freedom”, and where the contradiction between the individual and the group has overcome its current acuteness. They are, as such, one of the richest areas for encountering the progress of technocracy, with the most progressive democracy. An encounter delayed by the contradictions of today’s world, but which arguably won’t be prevented from happening. Only that the urgency is ours...

In order to understand that probability, we shall consider the following characteristics:

1. The graphic arts are profoundly influenced by modern techniques, from sales and publicity and public relations. Directly or indirectly, the study or implicit knowledge of the motivations dealt with in the purchase of a product influences everything from the pagination of a magazine, to the art of a book or poster. The graphic arts are therefore an instrument of culture that is of interest as much to aesthetics as it is to anthropology: or, at least, the practical expression of an ambiguous cultural anthropology (in this limited area it is evident that mankind acts as though overcoming all myths means the fabrication of self-made myths).

2. The graphic arts, without denying their basic definition, tend, catastrophically, to be made up of and for large demographic groups. Magazines such as *Match* or *Life* tend to overcome national conditions, they are composed in various languages – and

as such, tend to move away from original ideological narrowness, which sits badly with the majority. Given that these publications end up belonging objectively to such diverse sectors of international society, they are forced into an objectivity that, though not being the richest, still has an appreciable value. An inclination towards universalism: the topics of Khrushchev’s visit to America or the death of President Kennedy are covered with identical prominence. In this case it is not “good will” that becomes a categorical imperative, but something of which Kant was unaware: the technique of human relations, or the strength of human relationships when they determine the levers of technocracy. We said: without denying their basic definition. In fact, along with electronic machines, we are seeing the renewal of manual techniques, and the refinement of techniques aimed at satisfying small numbers, too, such as serigraphy.

3. The graphic arts involve the adoption of all modern *visual* techniques. For the modern graphic artist, these are materials and instruments for the creation of their own objects: photography or lettering design; lyrical composition or chiaroscuro: the traditional techniques of painting or informalism: the lighting effects or staging of raw materials. There are no operational taboos for their creative activity. We emphasize in particular the use of lettering as a significant material in itself. In this field, too, graphic art work inherits a defined evolution of modern art to which, in part, we have already referred. The letters in Braque’s paintings, or the collages of printed pages in the first Cubist painting, the letter work of certain current painters, belong to one same movement of fusion between the objects of our knowledge and intimate, subjective experience. (At times fusion is confusion, it is a necessary and understandable epiphenomenon.) Espousing the richest meaning of the interrogations of Rimbaud or Baudelaire, the graphic arts – deeply interlinked with a poetic total of the modern man – also respond to Desnos’ even more tragic concern: “*Mots, êtes vous des mythes / Et pareils aux myrtes des marts?*”

And how do they respond? We shall attempt to answer this by way of conclusion.

CONCLUSION

The graphic arts tend to bring together in a unique aesthetic object the *experience* and *explanation* of things and of ourselves: they contribute to the occurrence of an increasingly vast empirical plenitude, a common rhythm in human life. They are a vehicle of intimacy among men. This path of synthesis takes place through and against: a) The anarchism of progress in different contemporary cultures: b) The extreme specialisation and growing particularities of techniques, including the techniques of expression. Graphic art work manifests itself as a live battle against all kinds of division, a vehicle of universalism. This path towards universalism emerges slowly (it is not, of course, a path isolated from other paths or factors) and takes place in the way that genuinely aesthetic motivations are confounded with the motivations thought to intensify the economy of commercial and cultural exchanges. This identification is initially made abstractly becoming concrete only in

the perspective of the discovery of a new content for human relations: the motivations of freedom.

In this sense, and in particular, graphic art work (such as cinema, for example), precipitates the end of the divisions between the different forms of art, between literary arts and visual arts. It contributes, as such, to the rediscovery of a universal language, where the respective signs would be significant in themselves, and to themselves. Words, in this universal language, foreseeable through the graphic arts, would be cured of all their illnesses, they would cease the appearance of myths; cease to threaten us with their transformation into something lethal like the myrtles of the dead. Babel would cease to cast a shadow over us with its curse. There was a time when bread was sacred; and generally speaking, all objects made by mankind deserved the respect that resulted from (in terms of the conscience of those who used them) their immersion in their respective motivations. The aesthetic object was, through religious mediation, inseparable from its respective function. Naturalism led us to look at natural or manmade objects as a vision that was simultaneously cosmic (I refer to the naturalism of a Marquis de Sade, for example) and indifferent. What kind of mother, in our time, would tell her son to kiss the piece of bread that has fallen on the floor?

Today's objects object. In the future, they will perhaps adopt another kind of dignity, which is the continuation of lost dignity. The word love, the letter A, bread, would cease to be more or less fatal accidents in our daily life. Desacralized, they would be as decisive as the slightest brushstroke made by the painter in a picture. Life could be compared to a vast work of art, everything would be absolutely aesthetic. Graphic art works help us understand this possibility. [...]

Who, today, does not depend, directly or indirectly, on the graphic arts?

Ernesto de Sousa, "Artes Gráficas, Veículo de Intimidade", first published in Armando Alves. Porto: Inova, 1965.

This translation was first published in the catalogue Your body is my body / O teu corpo é o meu corpo: colecção de cartazes de Ernesto de Sousa, organized by Isabel Alves, Museu Coleção Berardo, 2015

ABOUT THE ERNESTO DE SOUSA POSTER COLLECTION ISABEL ALVES

"My life is a collage," stated Ernesto de Sousa in 1987.¹ This exhibition of his poster collection [*Your body is my body / O teu corpo é o meu corpo: colecção de cartazes de Ernesto de Sousa*, Museu Coleção Berardo, 2015], which represents only part of his vast estate, confirms this statement, revealing the intertwined nature of his life and his work.

Aesthetics formed an integral part of Ernesto de Sousa's life, in which absolutely everything had an aesthetic dimension, to the extent that it could be compared to a work of art. Ernesto de Sousa's life could have been quite different, but he did not want it any other way. He dedicated his life to shaping younger generations and pushing them forward. Ernesto was a source of enthusiasm, dynamism and motivation; he was the one who sowed the seed. He fought against prejudice and was committed to everything new, original and creative – in short, to modernity. And in a time of monolithic politics, the presence of this "volcanic" personality was crucial.

He was not a solitary artist. Interaction and rambling conversations were a vital part of his life. Many members of his circle before 1975 managed to shake off the apathy prevalent in a cultural scene that had been traumatized by censorship. One of them said that "José Ernesto de Sousa was one of two key people in my life, and one of the most generous spirits that I have ever known. He was a man of immense talents and had great intellectual capacity – I would even go so far as to say that he had an almost Socratic aura. He left his mark on a great many people."²

His wide-ranging cultural interests and tastes, always wholeheartedly pursued, opened the way for a vast array of experiences. In the specific case of poster art, its new forms and uses as a medium of democracy were the subject of extensive and diverse experimentation. Ernesto de Sousa endeavoured to observe and explore its possibilities and, in a more general sense, the possibilities of graphic art as a whole. As far as Ernesto was concerned, posters had the potential to be an important means of communication between the individual and the collective, and a "vehicle for intimacy", as stated in an essay written in 1964 and re-edited in this book.

A rather awkward person, he did make some enemies. In the columns and mini articles that he wrote between October 1974 and 1975 for the magazine *Vida Mundial*, he directly publicized or reviewed his friends and lots of other people. I will mention some of these by way of

example, which relate to various artists and posters that feature in this collection.

"A lone rider, but not a sad figure, the architect António Sena appears to be the only person who is fighting for 'design' and understanding of it in this country. As a result, his wonderful articles in *Fixe* seem to be drowning in a sea of indifference."³

"By accident, I also cited a 'work' without mentioning its creator. This piece was a poster reproduced in one of the previous issues of *Vida Mundial*, inspired by the PAIGC [The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde] flag. I must explain that I consider a simple poster or another such 'utilitarian' object just as worthy (if not more so) of being called art as the most vaunted paintings, or the most lauded sculptures. The poster was by Robin Fior, a figure worthy of attention and praise. An Englishman, Fior is a former lecturer in Graphic Design at one of the most prestigious colleges in London, and has lived in Portugal for many years. He initially worked for 'Práxis', but is now taking a different direction, applying his talent for graphic design to illustrating a political perspective. An exhibition of his work, among others, will be necessary in the future."⁴

"(...) Melo e Castro has been one of the most important figures working in the area that lies between poetry and visual art. The exhibition of his work is both stimulating (in terms of the practice of poetry, for teaching (including an understanding of the media, and visual communication in particular)) and somewhat controversial (for instance, it questions the rigid and academic division of art into genres, families and categories)." Image caption: "Duplicated' experimental poetry by Melo e Castro (non-expert readers should feel free to take a printed page and manipulate it in a poetic way)."⁵

"Beyond aesthetic arguments, even those of a pressing nature, there seems to be no doubt: there is, and has always been, immediate and urgent 'interventionist art' that generally manifests itself through the mass media. Be it caricatures or compelling poster 'art', it would certainly be a mistake to classify such expressions as a lesser type of art. (...) "⁶

"Posters marked 'Movimento Democrático de Artistas Plásticos' have appeared as supplements in a number of newspapers. I suppose it might at least be said that visual art and graphic design are completely divorced here. And there is an unmistakable and surprising penchant for 'kitsch' in some of these teratological graphic phenomena. (By kitsch, I mean tweekness, bad taste and the like.) If you want to move past this poor advertisement, go to Belém to see the famous '10 June mural', a much more serious work by artists engaged in the 'movement'."

When Eduardo Prado Coelho held the post of Director-General of Cultural Affairs, Ernesto suggested the event *Alternativa Zero, Tendências Polémicas da Arte Portuguesa*, which was held in 1977 at the Galeria Nacional de Arte Moderna. A substantial number of the posters that were selected for *your body is my body - o teu corpo é o meu corpo* formed part of that exhibition, which set a landmark in the Portuguese art scene. Ernesto de Sousa also produced a series of explanatory texts and classifications in the form of captions to accompany the poster display. I think it would be illuminating to mention some of them here.

"This exhibition is called 'The Avant-Garde and the Mass Media - The Poster'. It is the first of a series; others will be dedicated to television, the press, stickers, etc. But a different title would also be appropriate: *The poster cannot be exclusively a part of the Society of the Spectacle*"

"There are posters that, by way of their design, mode of production or use, invite
excite
stimulate
participation"

"The poster can serve to promote / communicate a new code made up of signs like a brand or word"

"The poster can also be a tourist guide or a sheet an image suggesting another means of communication such as some text or a film conceptual operation a humorous or dramatic assertion of the image of the very artist"

"A limited number of copies (sometimes only one) the poster is not always a form of mass media... but this does not limit its efficacy as a matter of course."

"All posters are political the study of explicitly political posters will form the subject of another exhibition"

"Certain posters have multiple uses. For example, they are at the same time poster and catalogue poster and tourist brochure poster and direct aesthetic intervention poster and wrapping paper poster and plastic utensil poster and theatre script etc."

"In certain cases, the poster is an integral part of an event or aesthetic intervention (happening event...)"

"The poster may be a musical score visual poem competition task manifesto or the use of an image of an activity"

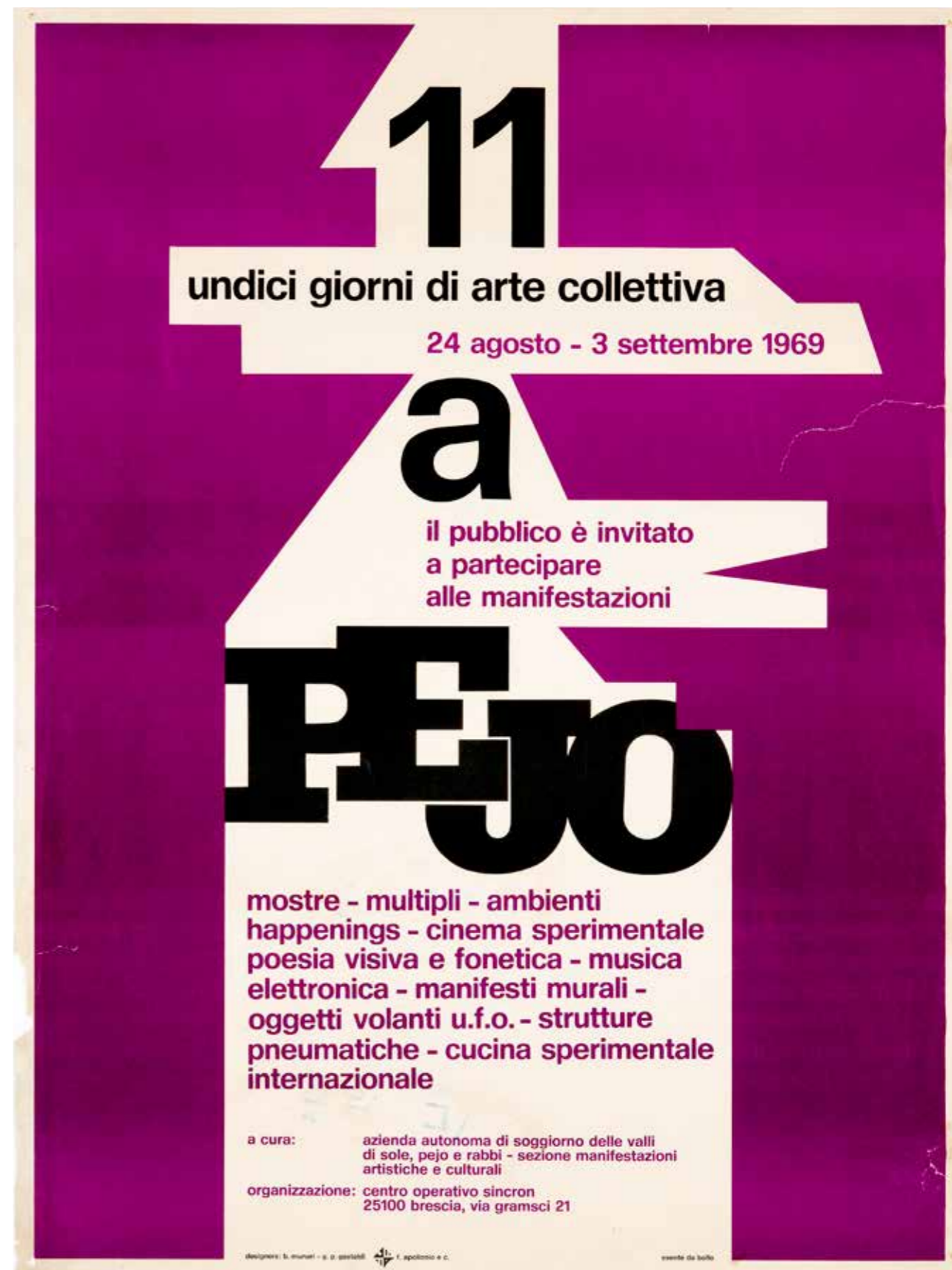
"Some posters are characterized by their method of production poor material quick execution relatively fleeting use"

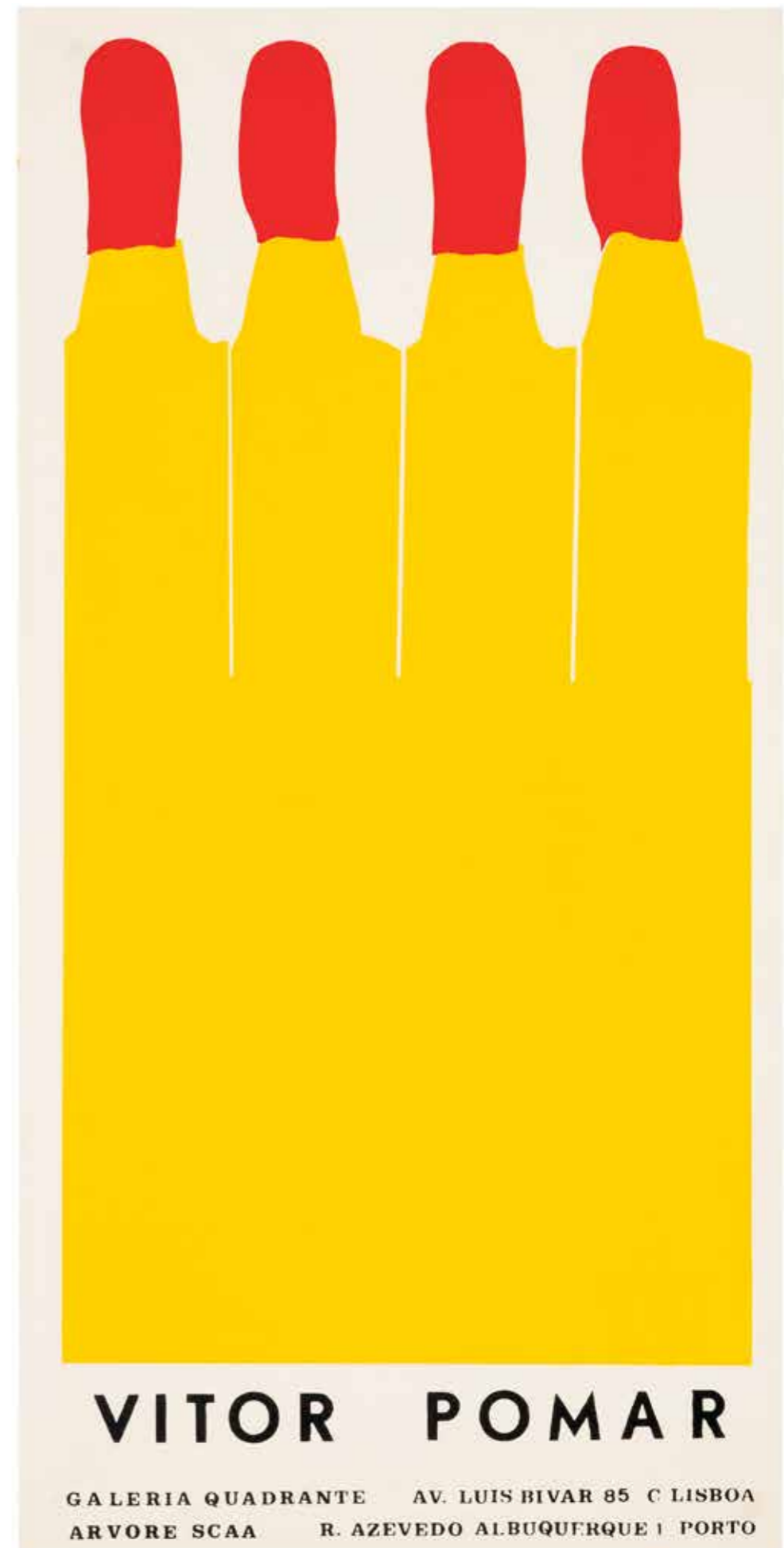
your body is my body - o teu corpo é o meu corpo presents itself not only as a vast and rich journey through the cultural output of the avant-garde movement in Portugal and abroad, but also as an imaginary journey, a map of many different routes, and the story of past meetings and future encounters, in which the unique and vital personality of Ernesto de Sousa can be recognized in everything - images, words, emotions - conveyed by the posters, those "vehicles of intimacy".

[...]

- 1 Ernesto de Sousa in an interview with Rui Ferreira e Sousa, in *O Jornal* (August 1987).
- 2 António Pedro Vasconcelos in an interview with Helena Sacadura Cabral, in *Máxima* (November 1990).
- 3 Ernesto de Sousa, "O 'design' de Sena", in *Vida Mundial* (#1840, 19 December 1974), p. 6.
- 4 *Idem*, "A Bandeira de Robin Fior", in *Vida Mundial* (#1878, 11 December 1975), p. 6.
- 5 *Idem*, "Dos Conceitos Poéticos", in *Vida Mundial* (#1841, 26 December 1974), p. 5.
- 6 *Idem*, "Arte e Intervenção", in *Vida Mundial* (#1837, 28 November 1974), p. 5.
- 7 *Idem*, "Artistas e Gráficos", in *Vida Mundial* (#1831, 17 October 1974), p. 5.

This text was first published in the catalogue *Your body is my body / O teu corpo é o meu corpo: coleção de cartazes de Ernesto de Sousa*, organized by Isabel Alves, Museu Coleção Berardo, 2015

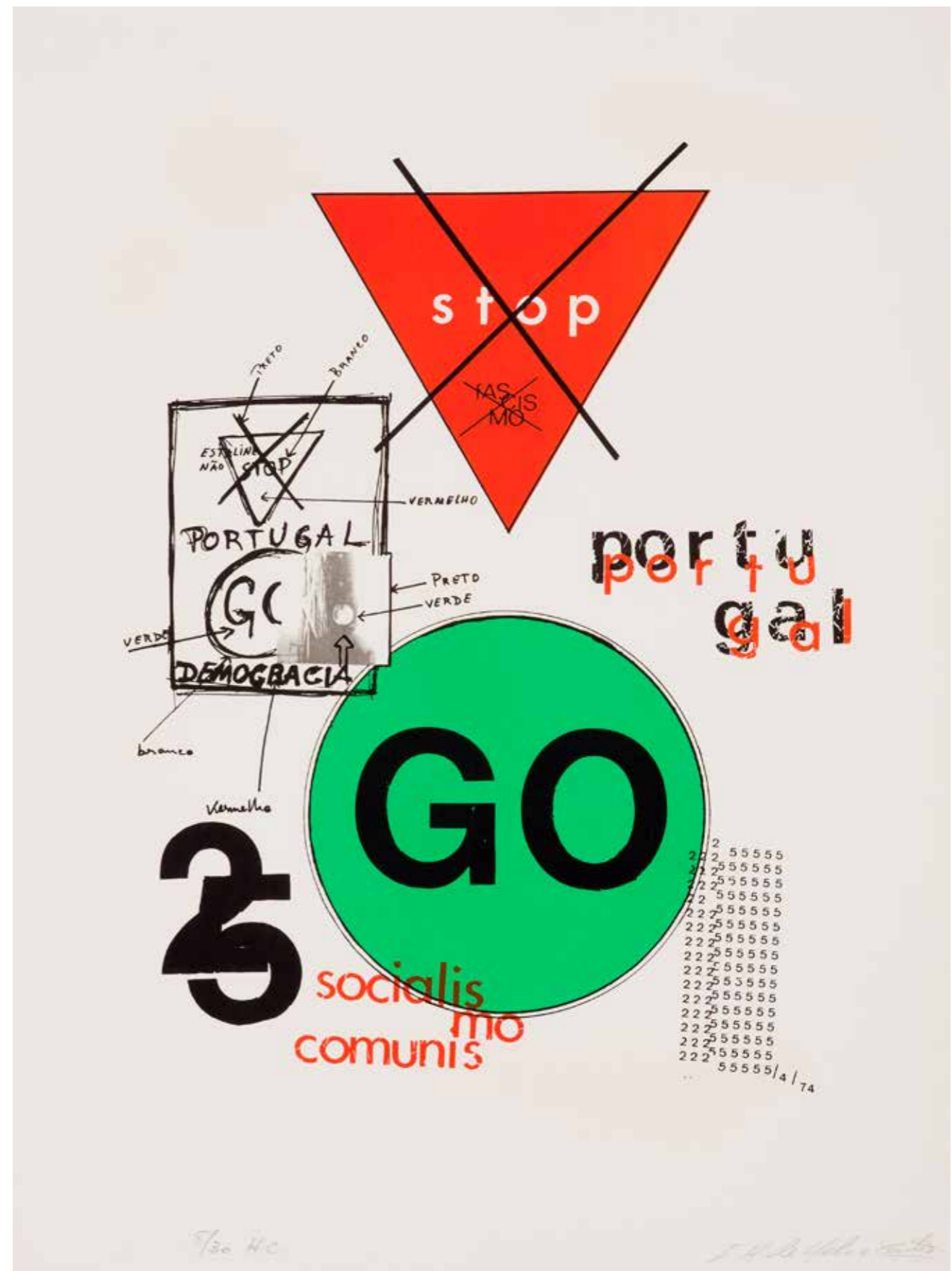
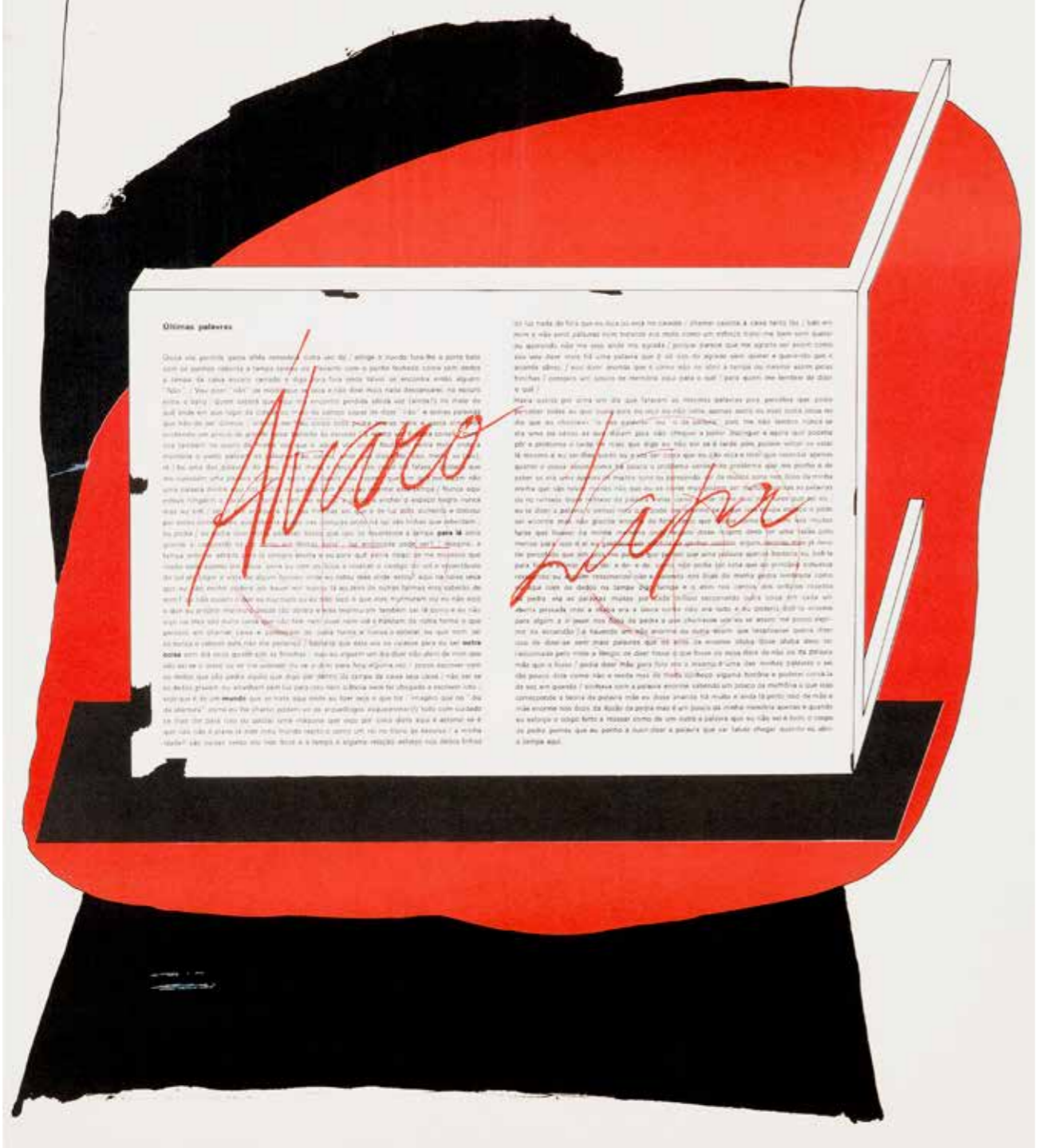




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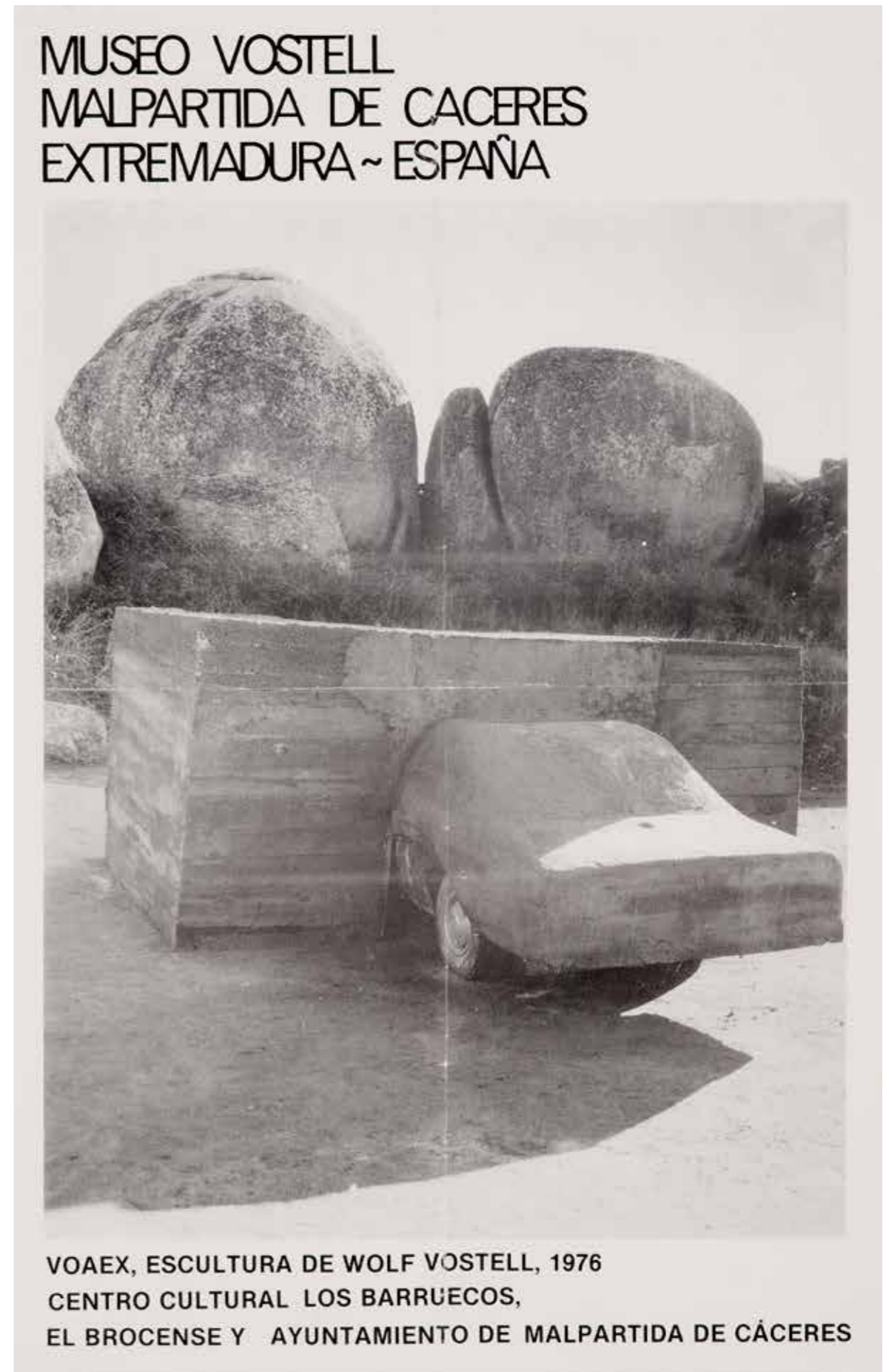
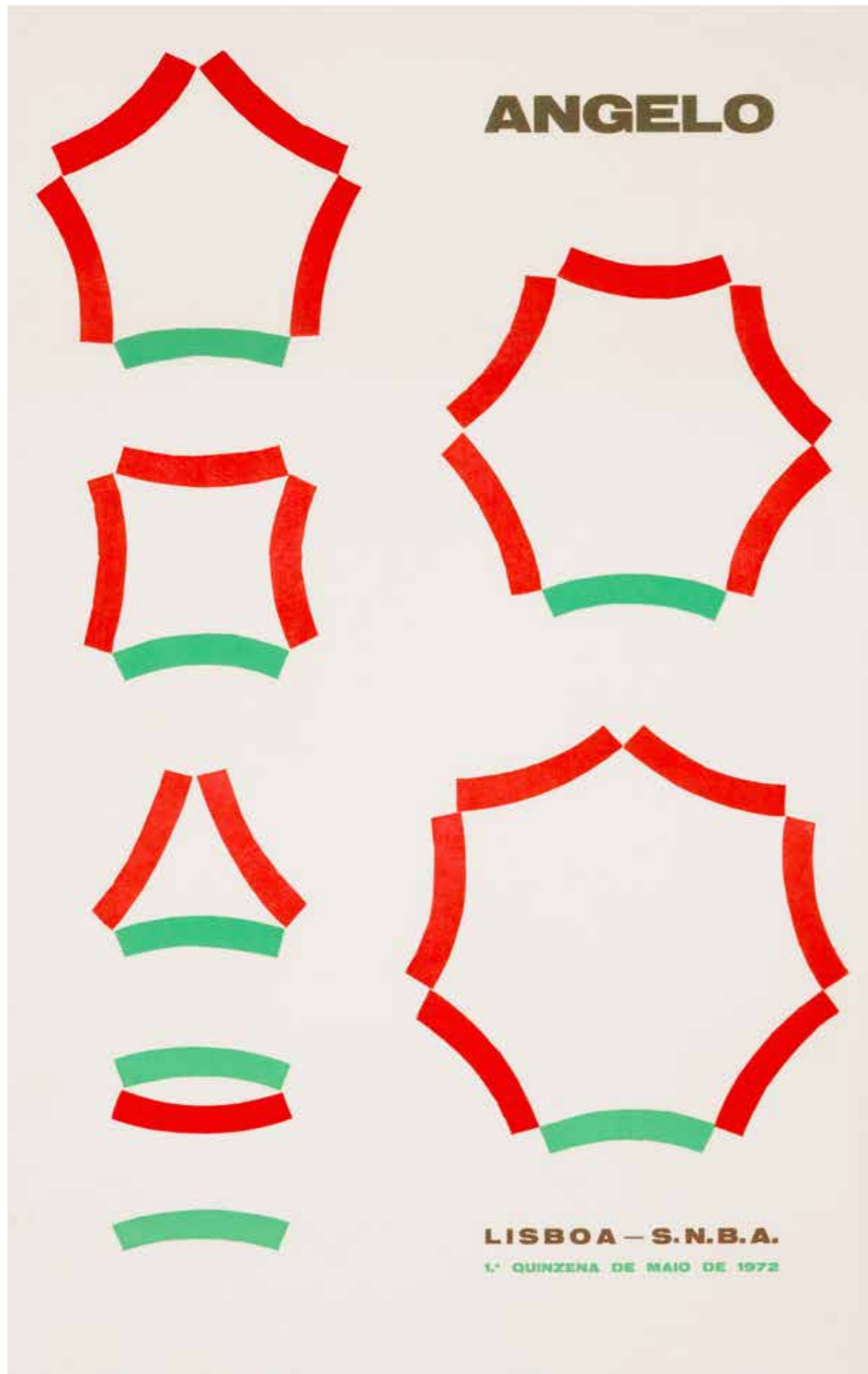
FEVEREIRO / MARÇO - 1977

AVENIDA DA BOAVISTA, 854 - PORTO



<p>O GESTO</p> <p>A LINGUAGEM</p>	<p>A SINTAXE</p> <p>A MÁQUINA</p>
<p>A RUA</p> <p>O TEXTO</p>	<p>A DIALÉCTICA</p> <p>O CONCEPTU</p>
<p>A FLORESTA</p> <p>OS SINAIS</p>	<p>SÍNTESES</p> <p>E.M. DE MELO E CASTRO</p> <p>QUADRUM 8 a 31 maio 1978</p>
<p>A ESTRUTURA</p> <p>A IDEIA</p>	<p>A PALAVRA</p> <p>A PÁGINA</p>

		<p>ANGELO DE SOUSA</p> <p>PINTURAS 1971-75</p> <p>ABRIL 75</p>
		<p>GALERIA QUADRUM</p> <p>RUA ALBERTO OLIVEIRA</p> <p>52 TEL. 77 97 23</p> <p>ALVALADE LISBOA</p>





DA SÉRIE: ENTRADA NEGRA
ENTRÉE NOIRE
1980

helena almeida

Alberto Carneiro

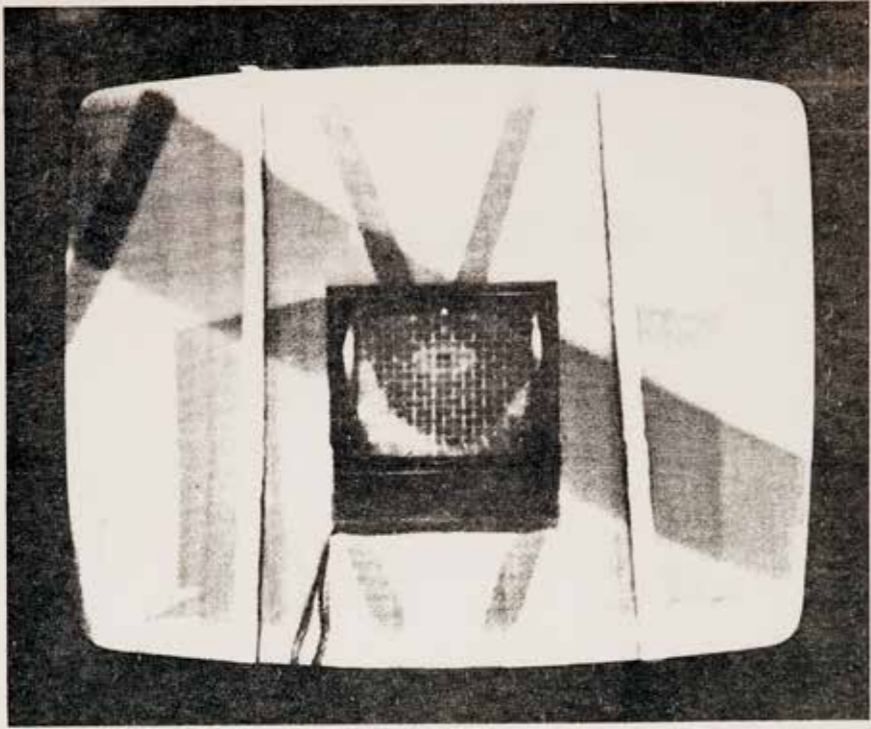
AINDA O MAR
PARA ALÉM DO LABIRINTO 1978

SINAIS E SABEDORIA
DA FLORESTA 1978/80

SOBRE O MEU CORPO
O RASTO DA SERPENTE 1980

GALERIA DIFERENÇA
RUA S. FILIPE NÉRY 42 LISBOA

ABRIL/MAIO 1981

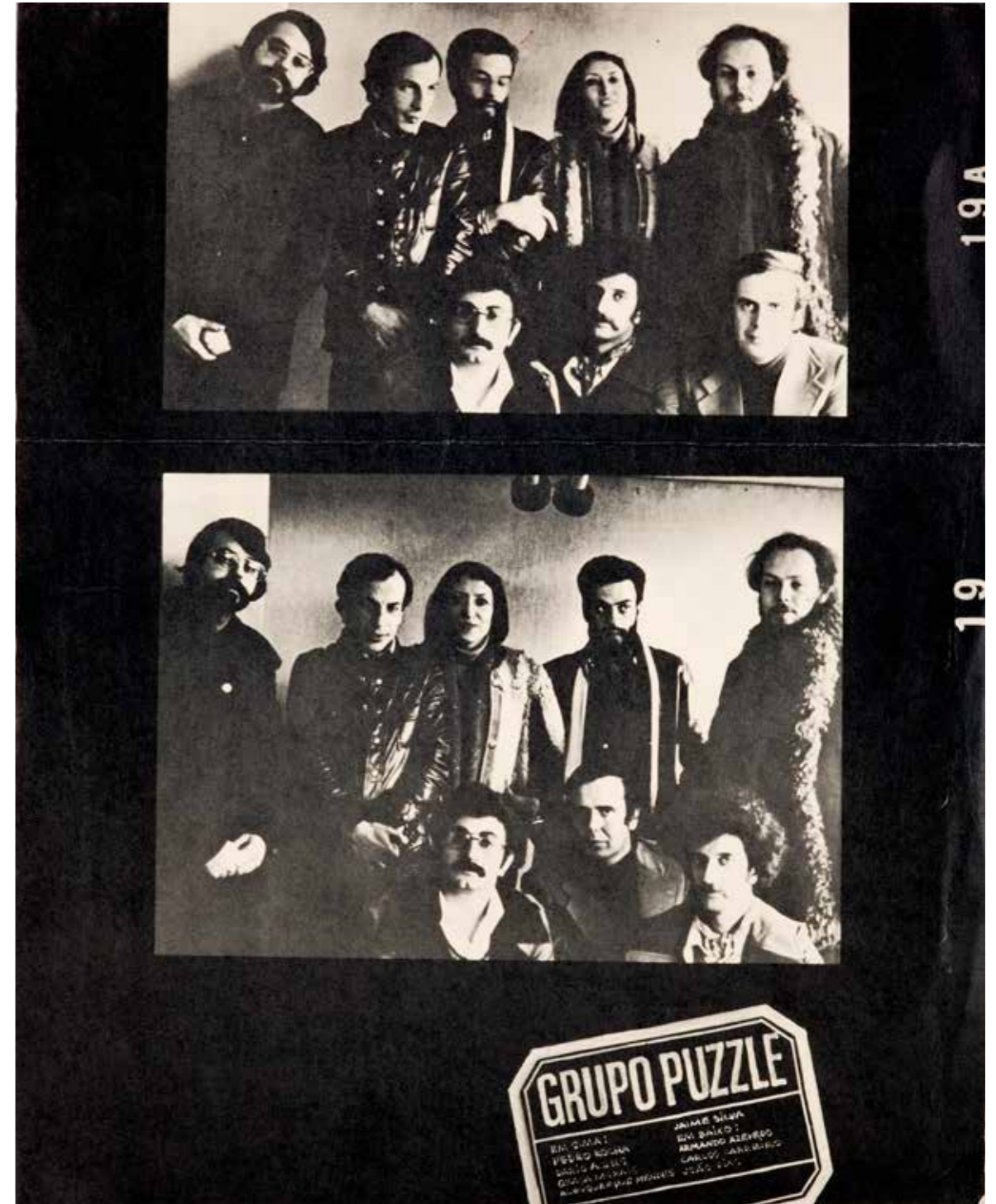


"GNAIT"

JULIÃO SARMENTO

15 a 28 dezembro

galeria capc rua castro matoso, 18 coimbra



are characterized by great ingenuity. The limits to such participation are often too narrow and obvious, and work or function doesn't always rise above the category of mere toy or easy game. Our exercise intends to assume, as it should, the terms of an effective participation of the spectator in the 'spectacle'. We will even meet some 'ingenuities' if required. Since it is an exercise, there are ingenuities that must be experimented in order to be eventually surpassed in the future. We know too little about a certain number of things while operatory means to reach certain goals. The goals, however, must be clear and precise, and rigorous as intention. We aim for a choral work, we aim to analyze in laboratory, in depth, in comprehensively, the paths for an enriching gathering. We aim to destroy individual solitude – the one, exactly, that the theatre spectator encounters after applauding all the actors in any normal show. Therefore our exercise does not end, or if you wish, it ends every night, not with the applause but with a late supper, through which, and in life afterwards, we aim to continue a gathering and an ever diverse communication.”

THEATER AND CINEMA

Among the forms incurred in the exercise *Nós Não Estamos Algures*, cinema has its key position, as other similar forms of audiovisual communication, successive and simultaneous slides projection, etc. In addition, we are told the whole first part of the exercise was designed to be filmed and integrated in the movie *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra* [Almada, a Name of War], produced by Ernesto de Sousa. It is therefore another extension of this work that aims to not have a single and precise extension.

Text published in *Vida Mundial*, #1588, November 14, 1969

Translation: Isabel Basto

Nós não estamos algures. Exercícios sobre a poesia comunicação (1969)

Script and direction by Ernesto de Sousa.

Music composition and direction by Jorge Peixinho featuring musicians António Silva, Helena Cláudio and Clotilde Rosa.

Poems by Almada Negreiros, Mário Cesariny, Herberto Helder and Luiza Neto Jorge, read by António Borga, João Luís Gomes, Madalena Pestana and Pena Viçoso.

Technical support and participation of Clube de Teatro 1º Acto (Francisco Madeira Luís, José Luís Madeira and José Torres) and members of the Oficina Experimental (Carlos Gentil-Homem, Filomena Fernandes, Isabel Alves, Manuel Torres, Maria Manuel Torres, Marilyn Reynolds, Peter Rubin and Teresa Pacheco Pereira).

Films *Happy People* and *Havia um Homem que Corria* by Ernesto de Sousa and Carlos Gentil-Homem from 1968.

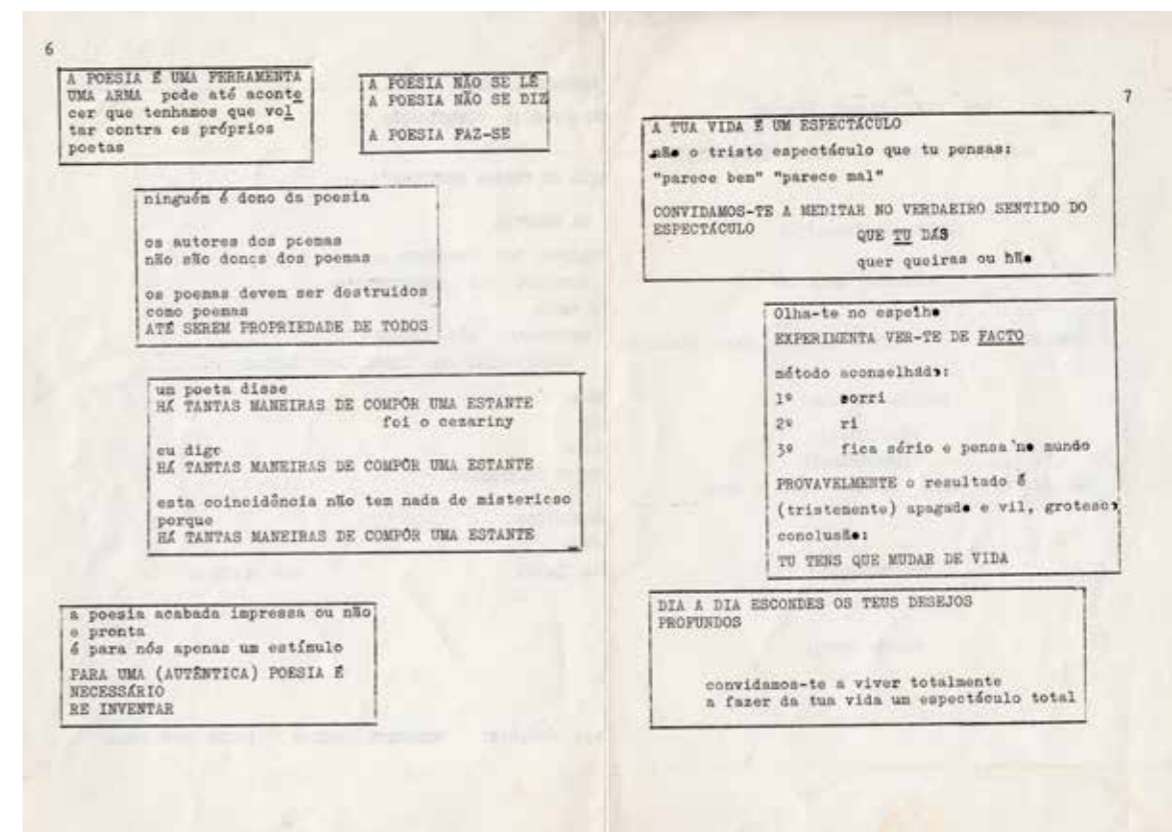
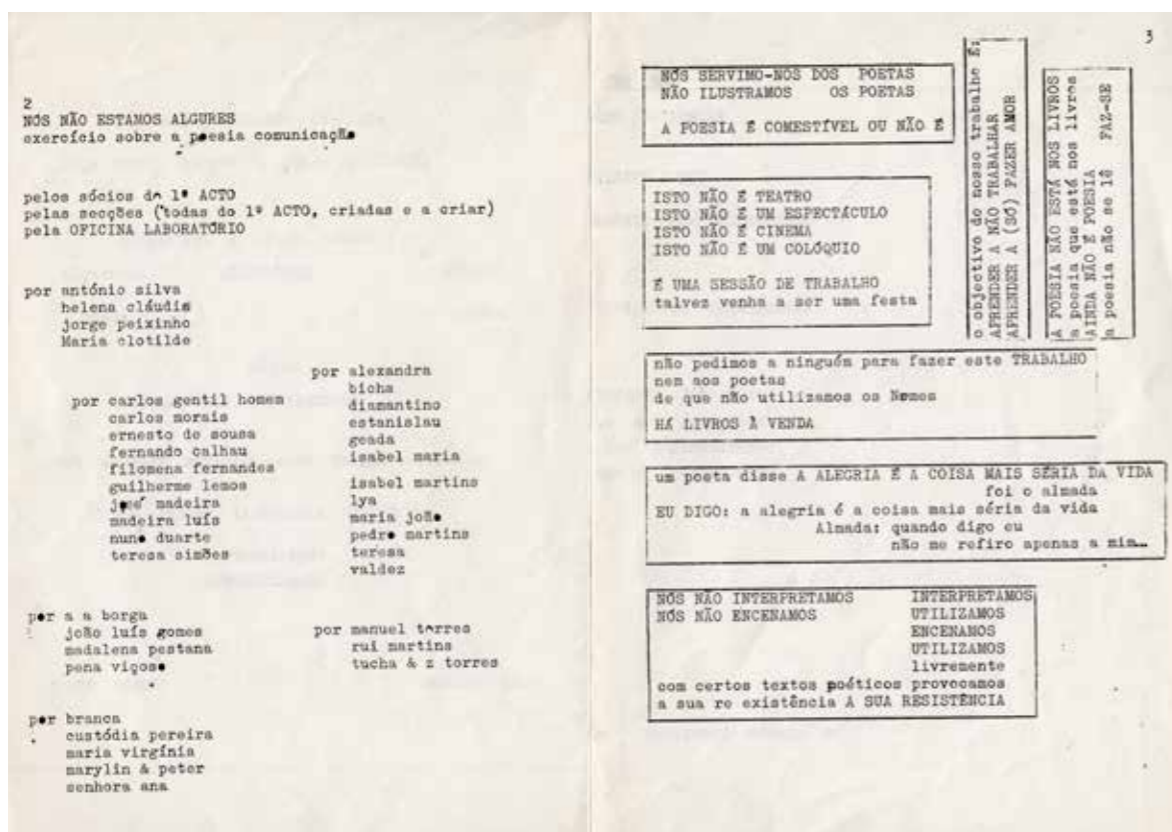
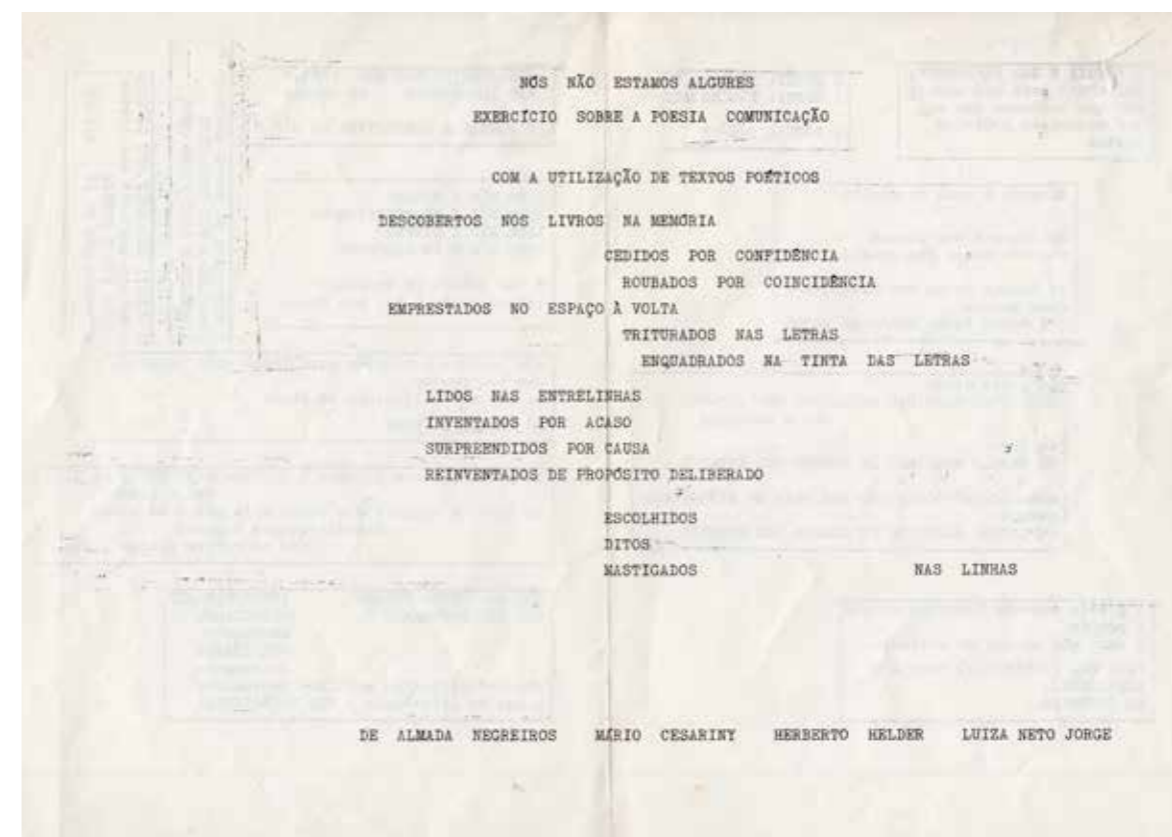
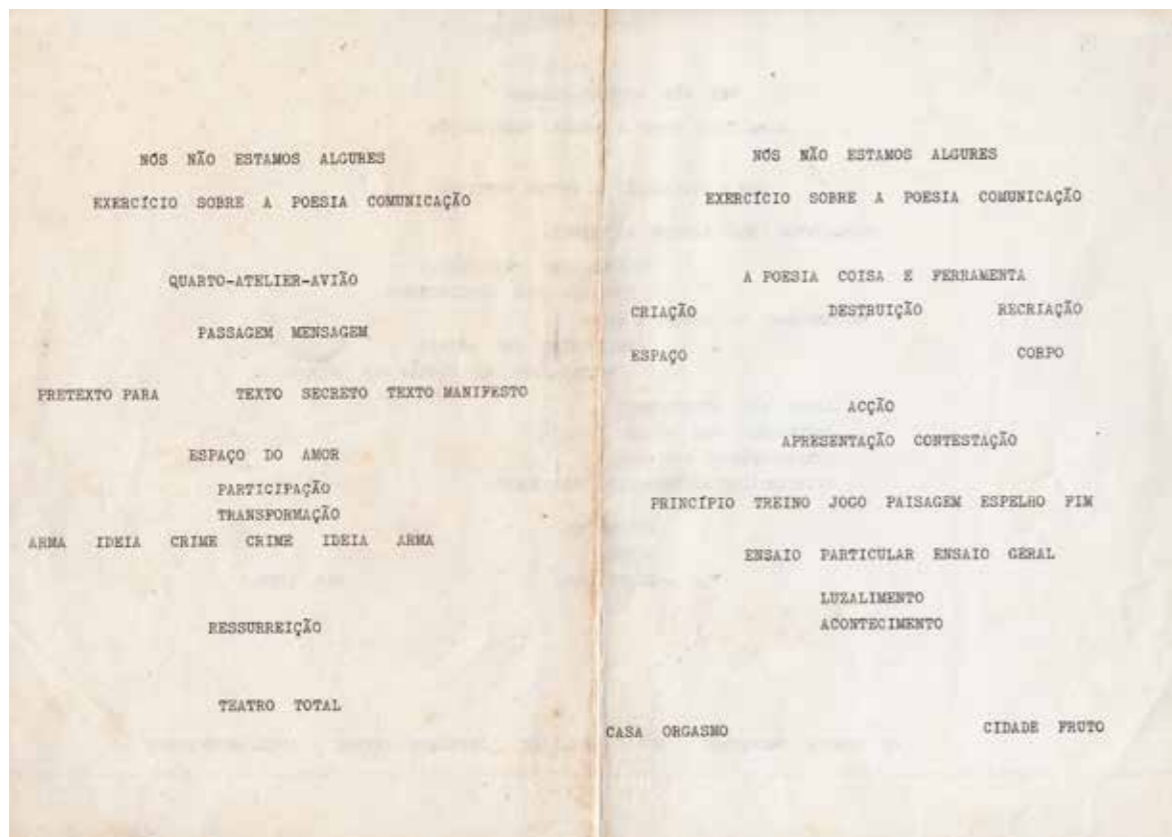
Slides by Ernesto de Sousa and Carlos Gentil-Homem.

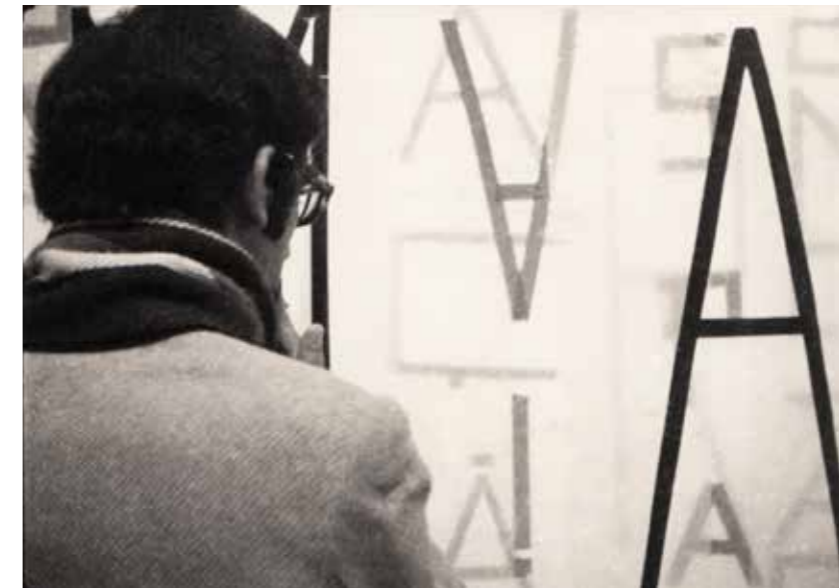
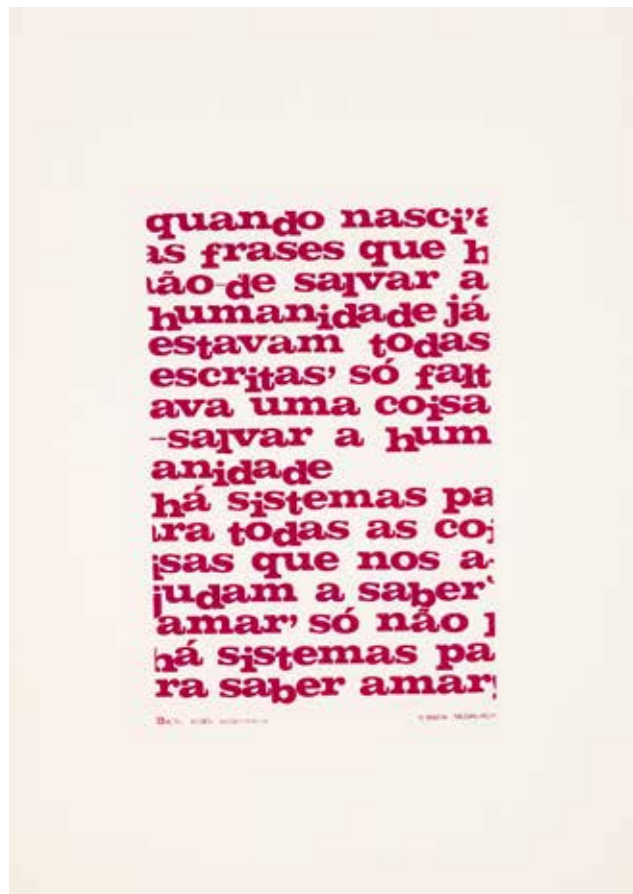
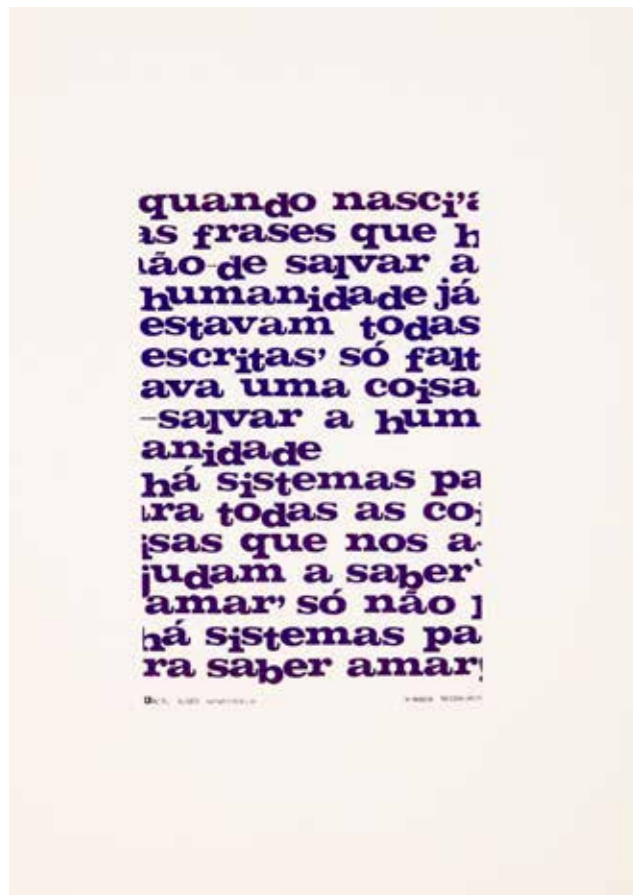
Lighting by Fernando Calhau.

Posters by Fernando Calhau and Carlos Gentil-Homem.



Poster by Carlos Gentil-Homem, 1969





Posters for Nós Não Estamos Algueres by Fernando Calhau, 1969



Images from preparations for and the performing of Nós Não Estamos Algures, 1969

Public participation (directed by Jorge Peixinho) during the performing of Nós Não Estamos Algures (left)
Diapositives projected in Nós Não Estamos Algures (right)



ALMADA – A NAME OF WAR ERNESTO DE SOUSA

[...]

However, we declare that the-movie-being-made, named ALMADA – UM NOME DE GUERRA [ALMADA – A NAME OF WAR], using the fortunate expression coined by Vitor Silva Tavares, intends to be more than a movie. We could simply add that the movie, movie-making, is mainly intended to trigger a process, the described Process. And we would hence be in a polemical situation: the movie itself does not matter or matters little. Yet, it is important to explain that this is not a pretension of circumstance, that it corresponds to deep concerns, and that by inverting the factors, the movie and Almada Negreiros himself represent *to me*, originally and primarily, not a purpose, a goal, but principles.

What principles and to postulate what?

The principle of a critical revision of Portuguese culture and art, based on one its most extraordinary key figures, the novelist, poet, painter and essayist Almada Negreiros?

Certainly. That is already underway and may efficiently be achieved with the publication of a collective book, and with the film itself – aiming to assume a critical character, as already announced. However, *mea culpa*, our ambitions are greater.

With this movie we aim to question the very foundations of what has been considered *to be* cinema and art itself. An anti-cinema attitude is not original but it is necessary, and perhaps it is original and necessary among us. In fact, while certain issues once aesthetical *now* become adult and responsibly... ethical, regarding cinema in Portugal we live at least in a pseudo-neo-romantic infantilism of love-for-cinema that oscillates between ignorance and unconsciousness (not to mention careerism, which is another story). Just naming one example: love-for-cinema and contempt-for-theater, so common among our “young” filmmakers. After Brecht and his passionate and debatable repercussion in the work of Godard; after the “happenings” and “Action Theater”; after all revolutions and meditations proposed by Dadaists and Neo-Dadaists, and all proposals from other meridians, from the Bauhaus and ensuing generation; after all evidence of necessary change in our objective relation with the world, such contempt-for-theater, if not opportunistic, may be reduced to a pitiful case of redneck, generally pedantic provincialism.

It is not a question of being “à la page”, of setting the clocks according to what is made abroad. We speak of necessity, and we may add urgent, unpostponable need. For the Portuguese culture, disconnected, disengaged and inimical to itself, modernity has become not a fancy illustration but the only way out, if we don’t all want to resign, writers, artists, filmmakers and others, to mere epigones, snooping skillful monkeys. In fact, as we clearly sink into a mass consumption society, paradoxically infected with acculturated peasants, our men of culture turn away from their own reality, and in the case of cinema, not only do they conform to an information elected conformingly (genre *Cahiers du Cinéma*), but they are also barricaded in an obsolete specialization, as if we were still in the time when we had to fight for the “artistic”

Stills from Happy People (filmed by Ernesto de Sousa and Carlos Gentil-Homen), 1968, shown as part of Nós não estamos algures

category of cinema: the time of the “Seventh Art”. (Should the typewriter take the place of the Eighth Art, and the electronic computer to the ninth, twentieth, twenty-fifth?...)

Among all this, here and now, we must use cinema beyond cinema, in a film-action leading us to an obvious Baroque mode (even beyond critical reason), facing ourselves, as total actors, totally responsible: “We are realistic, we aim for the impossible”. And we must ask: Why Almada Negreiros in a movie as this? – We could simply answer: Why not? – But the positive reasons are quick to declare: Almada Negreiros is the most relentless contradicting living Portuguese artist, who nowadays and here – as José-Augusto França likes to say: “with no master” – has resisted epigonism and the hermetic classifications of artistic genre and artistic milieu. This is why *Almada, A Name of War*, aiming for a non-movie movie, open to more than one process besides the spectator process (also open), is a movie with Almada and not a film about Almada. Better still, it is a movie named after ALMADA because it is indeed A NAME OF WAR.

“Almada - Um Nome de Guerra”, first published in *Arquitectura* # 110, 1969

Translation: Isabel Basto

ALMADA, A MULTI-MEDIA NAME OF WAR ERNESTO DE SOUSA

Note: In this chronology and in other texts we use the expressions *mixed-media*, *intermedia* or *multimedia*, all referring to similar audiovisual concretions, varying the denominations according to the different geographical, cultural areas, etc. This activity, which is always dependent on the available space and material, may be included – at least in our case – within the vast field of “expanded cinema”. Anti-movie, film-inquiry, etc., were expressions used with more or less property, but that are no longer justified, nor didactically neither controversially.

... it is an open work:

The production began in 1969, with film-making, photography and sound recordings of the artist Almada Negreiros, who would die in June 1970 – in Lisbon.

Also in 1969, a Committee was setup to support this initiative chaired by José-Augusto França and composed by Filomena Fernandes, Lya Freire and Francisco Bronze, among others. Many people took interest in this initiative, particularly artists and critics.

Auctions with works offered by Portuguese artists to support *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra*; course by França about Almada; conferences by França, Jorge de Sena, Ernesto de Sousa and José Blanc de Portugal; round-table discussions, etc.

Nós Não Estamos Algures was performed at that time, called an “Exercise of Poetic Communication”. This multimedia event was based on the structure of the *A Invenção do Dia Claro* [Invention of the Clear Day] by Almada Negreiros, which was the first experience of the kind; and Almada also participated actively. Since then, there were collaborations by Carlos Gentil-Homem, Fernando Calhau, Jorge Peixinho and many others.

It was also during this experience that the Group of Contemporary Music of Lisbon was founded.

1970/72: Intense studies on the work of Almada Negreiros, especially regarding the little-known period of his activity in Madrid. (From which would result the discovery of the murals of the cinema San Carlos, currently under restoration.)

1972/74: Graphic works with Carlos Gentil-Homem and Maria Manuel Torres in Lisbon, London, Brussels and Vigo. In this last city the Studio Quid was formed, where almost all the graphic work of *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra* was made; slides, posters, stickers, etc.

1974/79: Polemic in Portuguese newspapers about this mixed-media. Some financial aid was granted by the Portuguese Institute of Cinema.

Meanwhile: the musical collaborations with Jorge Peixinho and the Contemporary Music Group of Lisbon are intensified.

1975/1981: Mixed-media *Luiz Vaz 73*, with the same musicians, in Gand, Brussels, Lisbon, Coimbra, Évora, Viana do Castelo.

This mixed-media was based on the work *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra*, and used part of the material already produced: thus we associated Almada Negreiros with Luís Vaz de Camões.

1979: First experimental production of a reduced version of *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra* in the Portuguese National Gallery of Modern Art with the collaboration of João Vieira and other artists and technicians.

(This experience employed the soundtrack of *Nós Não Estamos Algures*.)

All copies of the cinematographic piece were burned in the fire that destroyed that Gallery.

1983: Mixed Media *ULTIMATUM*, in New York, at the “Experimental Intermedia Foundation”, with the collaboration of Phill Niblock, Gerd Stern and others. This intervention used a graphical sequence of *A.U.N.* by G. – precisely the one that gave it the title and the theme.

1983: First universal presentation of *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra* (reduced version), in the Foundation Juan March, in Madrid, during the cycle dedicated to Almada Negreiros. The book *RE COMEÇAR: Almada em Madrid* was released before the presentation of this mixed media.

The presentation was made by António Pedro Vicente, Cultural Counselor of the Portuguese Embassy in Madrid (December 9).

1984: Presentation of this multimedia in Barcelona, at the Foundation Juan Miró (February).

First presentation in Portugal by initiative of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Service of Animation, Artistic Creation and Education by Art, at the Portuguese Center of Modern Art (September 11 and 12).

Translation: Isabel Basto

Almada, Um Nome de Guerra is a mixed media work by Ernesto de Sousa with a music composition by Jorge Peixinho, 1969-1972.

Film (35 mm and 16 mm; black & white and color; silent) and slide (black & white and color) projections, variable between presentations; sound (recorded music, with possible live music interventions, text readings and input of other audio sources); and printed graphic material (posters and stickers). Variable duration: 20'-40' (short version) or 240' (complete version).

“This work”, Ernesto de Sousa says in an interview in *Diário de Lisboa* (“Ainda não filmei as varinas todas: o anti-filme *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra*”, 16/4 1970), “has been and will continue to be very difficult for me, specially having had great doubts about how to make what I want (and about this I have much fewer doubts). / And why? Because it is a case - for me - of life or death... / I will explain. There are two fundamental reasons. / The first: What encountering Almada Negreiros has meant to me. That he is perhaps the most extraordinary man I've had the chance to meet doesn't really add much to the case. But that by invoking him I discover a NAME OF WAR for everything or most of the things that I'm interested in doing, that is what I increasingly feel the need to manifest. Risking interpretations (both literal and literary) I will say: what we are preparing is mainly the result of a meditation with Almada, the name of war for a modernity which interests me. Now and here. And a proposal for other meditations. / The second reason: TO BEGIN is the only thing that interests me (precisely like Almada Negreiros). I've started something important with Dom Roberto. (...) / Now I'm trying to begin, and to break another silence with this NAME OF WAR. / And to begin is terribly difficult.”

The film was initially shot in 35mm. In order to facilitate its screenings outside of conventional film theaters, a 16mm reduction was made. At the previously mentioned presentations, the editing of the film were done directly on the positive of the projected 16 mm copy. The “complete version”, that never came to be, was supposed to lengthen the sessions into get-togethers with late meals, informal discussion of the work of Almada Negreiros and of the filmic process of *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra*, and the sale of posters and film scraps in order to generate the revenue needed for further production and recovery of invested capital. Sessions of this kind were to be filmed and later integrated in the film-in-process. In addition to the slides made from a graphic experimentation with parts of the script, this mixed-media also included others like those of the details of Almada Negreiros' panels for Cinema São Carlos in Madrid, or those produced for *Luiz Vaz 73*.



Ernesto de Sousa, cover and pages from notebook for *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra*
Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa

3.8 Tema: EU ACABO APENAS DE CHEGAR

● legendas para suas figuras

Os três primeiros paratípicos são com o slogan Total mente bronca e portanto com total liberdade para a legenda.

Paratípico 1º: ALMADA É UM NOME DE GUERRA
A WARE OF WAR

Paratípico 2º: ESTA É A MINHA GUERRA

Paratípico 3º: (duas legendas)

- a) EU
- b) Quando digo EU não me refiro apenas a mim mas...

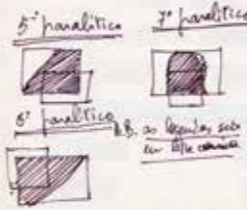
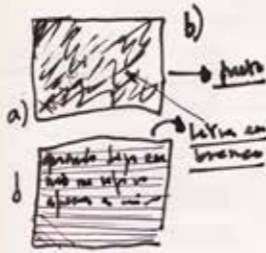
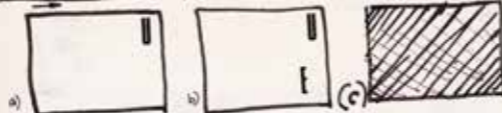
Paratípico 4º: (para sobreposição de 2 mãos adultas)

a guerra é a grande experiência é preciso criar aptidões pró heróicas modernas e heróis quotidiano.

outra/legenda: vós ó portugueses da minha geração que como eu não tendes culpa nenhuma de serdes portugueses INSULTAR O PERIGO

outra/legenda: Coragem portuguesa, só vos faltam as qualidades...

3º paratípico a) (EU)



1º sequêcia.

as palavras de pensamento do nome Almada; ou seja de minha vida; sentido pela

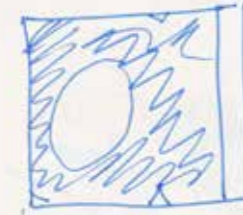
2º sequêcia.

- a) no tipo: almada
- b) em ortografia: é um nome de guerra;
a name of war; etc...

Nº as frases devem aparecer ao lado, a entenda é utilizada para a frase "é um nome..." nos vários lugares e não tem a letra.



	C/A	Es
3x Almada (a)	(m) 9	06/5
1x " " um nome de guerra	(m) 2	2
1x Retrab ...	(m) 4	3
1x ESTAMOS ...	(m) 4	5
1x de caso d ...	(m) 5	8
1x Tramp ...	(m) 9	2



3.8 Tema: eu acabo apenas de chegar



Almada - um nome de guerra

Paratípico 1º - (su bronca) Tratamento da frase: ALMADA É UM NOME DE GUERRA

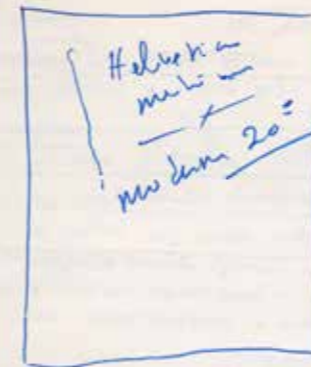
a) G.P. de pensamento de cada uma das letras que formam o nome Almada (Tipo: Helvetica Medium 75 ans.)

b) ALMADA

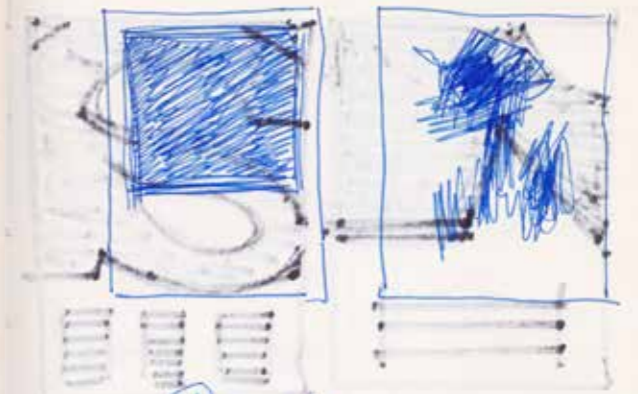
c) as ortografias: "é um nome de guerra"; "a name of war";

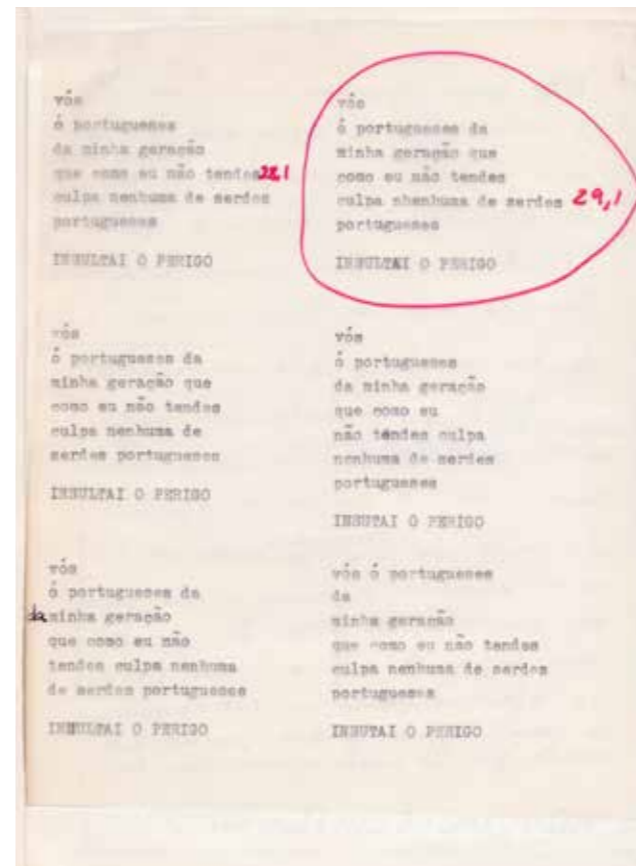
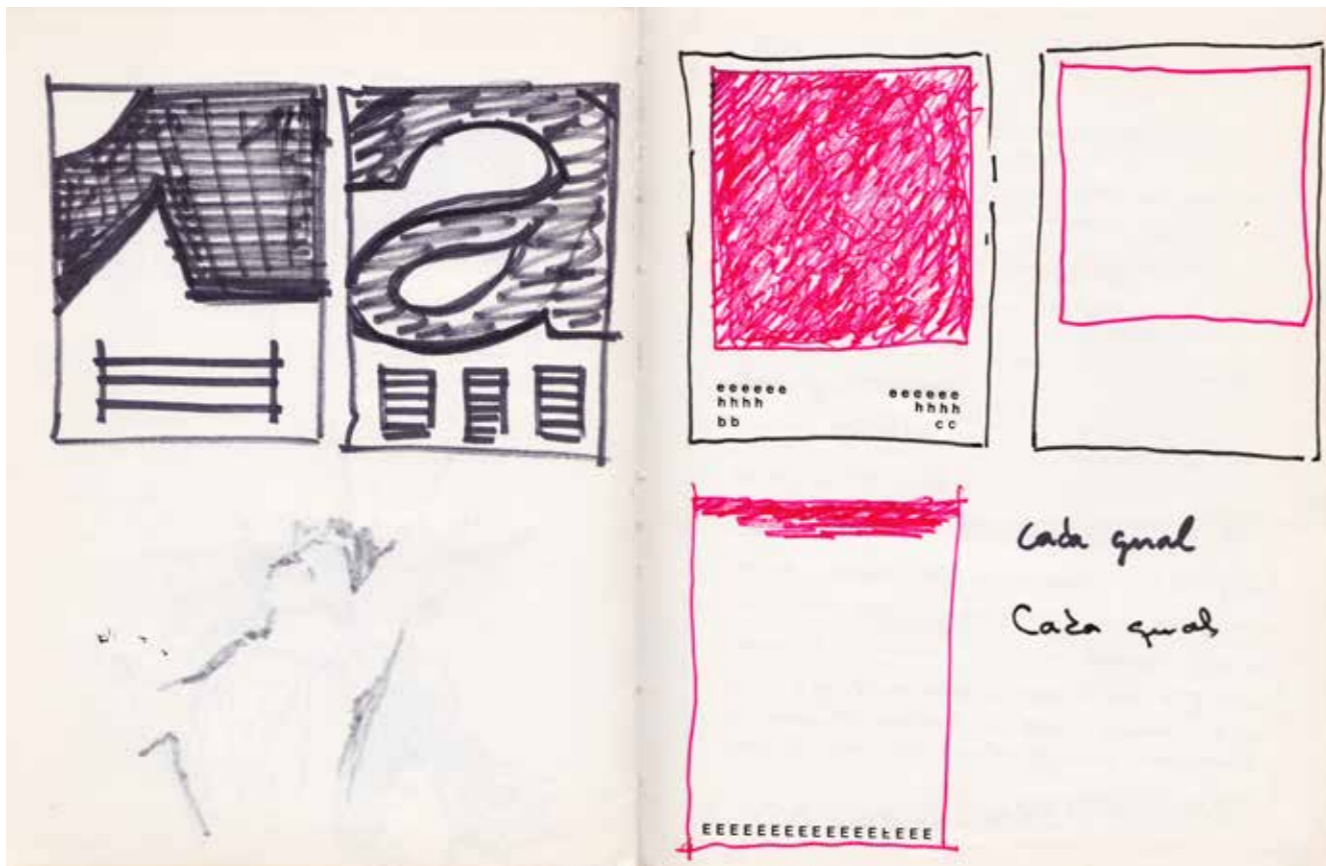


1º paratípico N. - mensagens rápidas de pensamento das letras que formam o nome ALMADA



Fantasia:
Tudo é um trabalho
em direção ao futuro pelo
costa a "sem" de legua
por entre as pontas por
sem, em meio, (peirinho)





fazia diferença entre viver
e existir

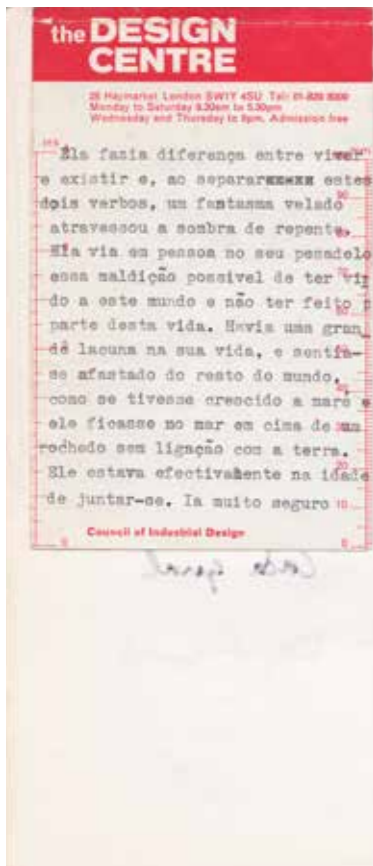
FAZIA DIFERENÇA ENTRE VIVER
FAZIA DIFERENÇA ENTRE VIVER

fazia diferença entre viver
fazia diferença entre viver
fazia diferença entre viver

fazia diferença entre viver
e existir ~~fazia~~

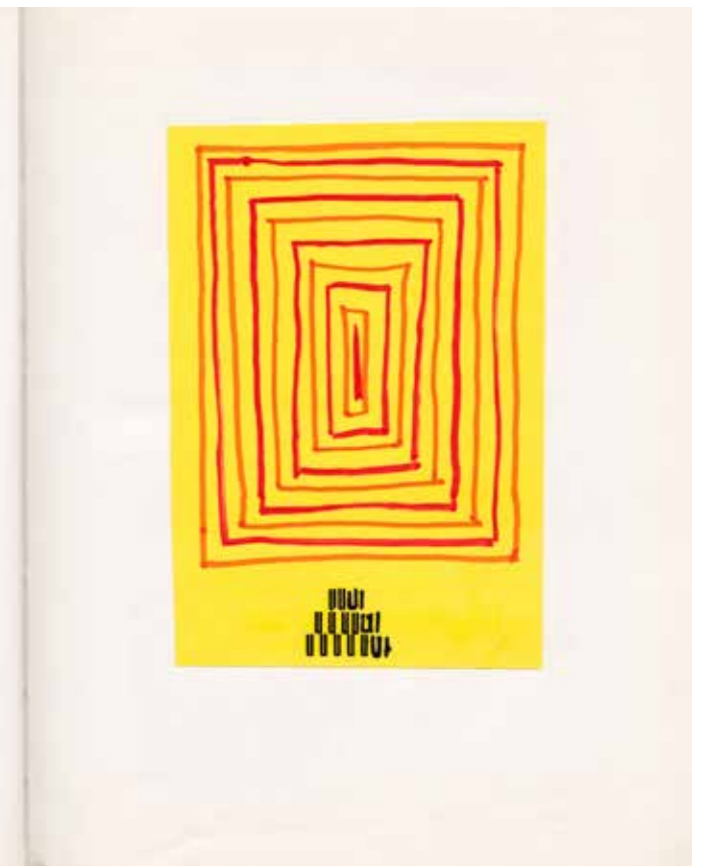
FAZIA DIFERENÇA ENTRE
VIVER E EXISTIR FAZIAD

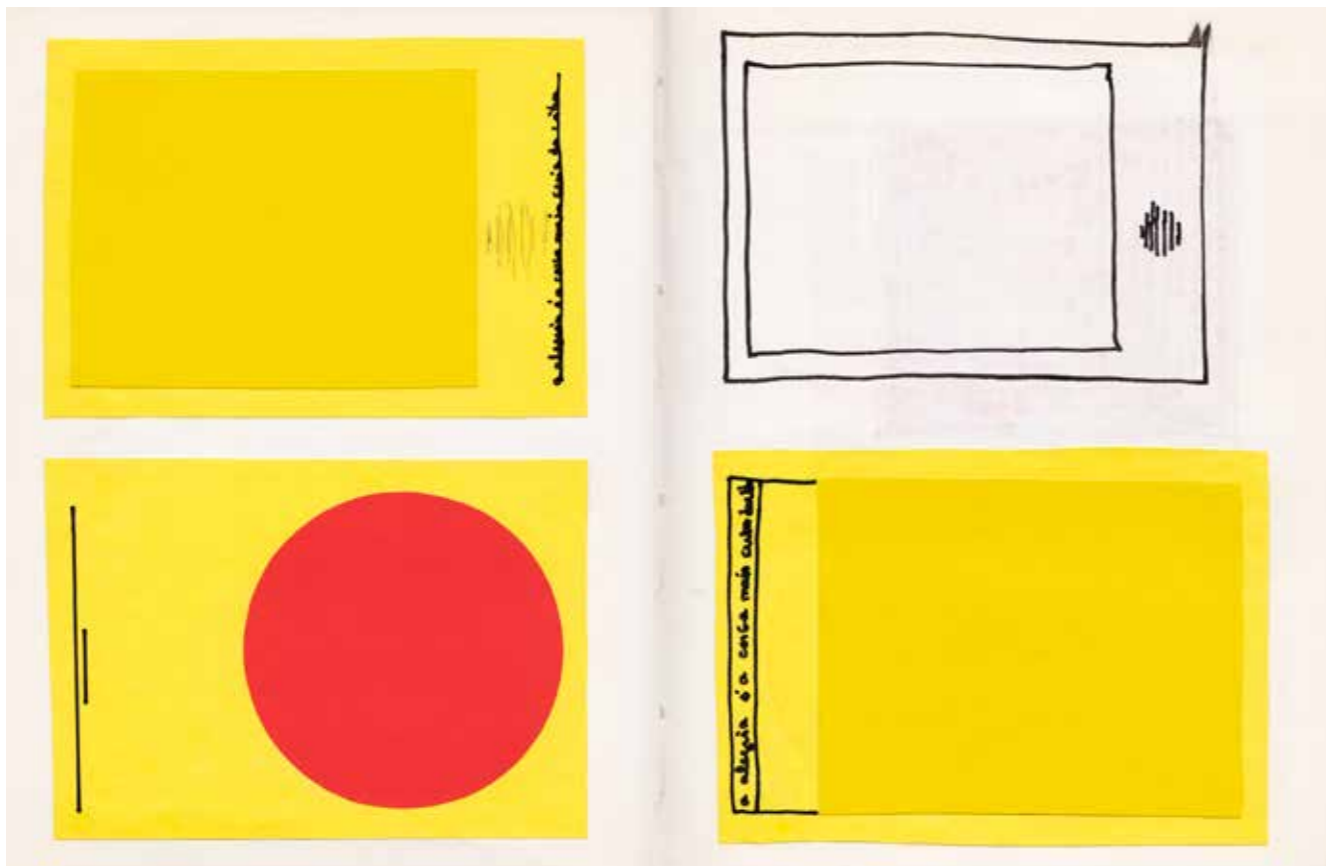
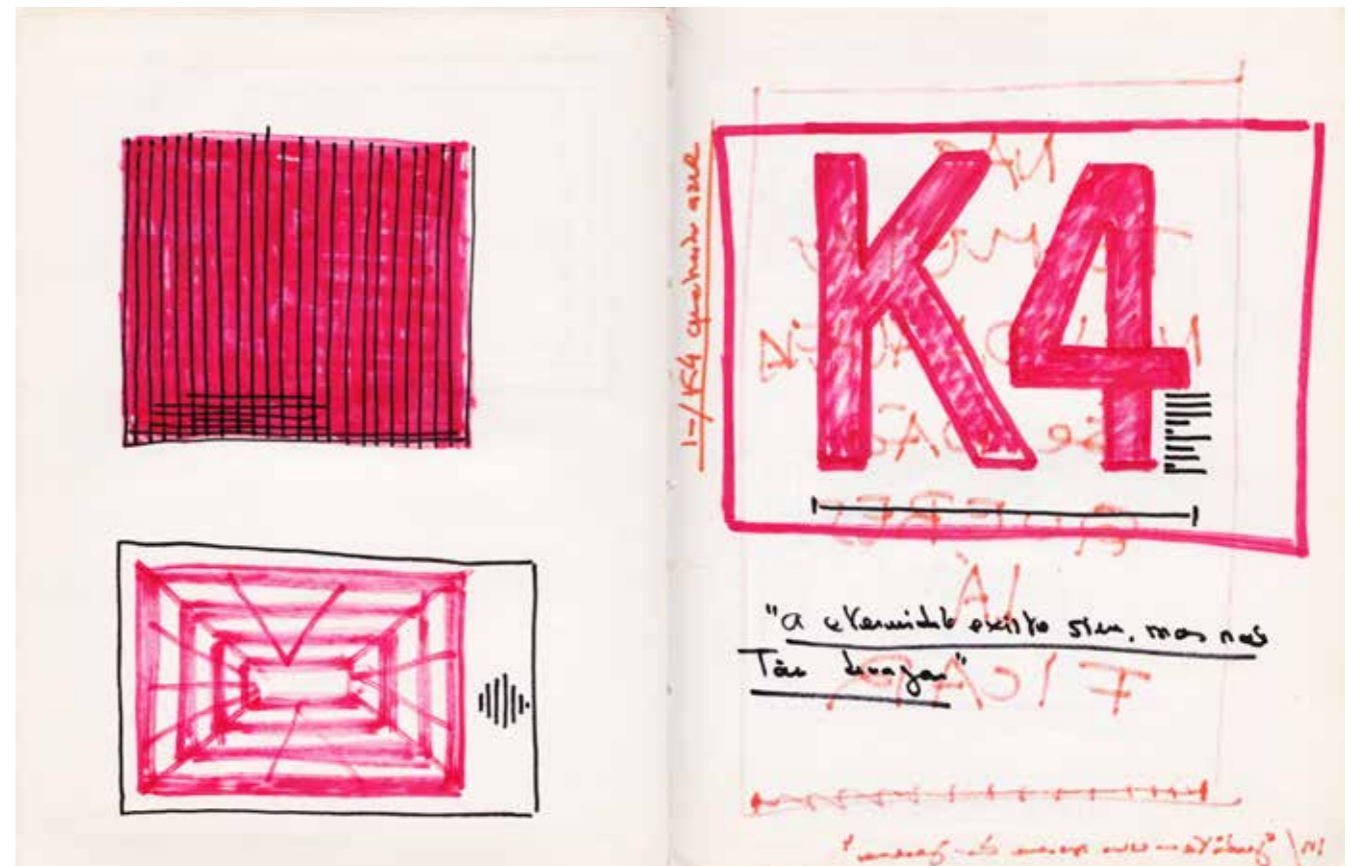
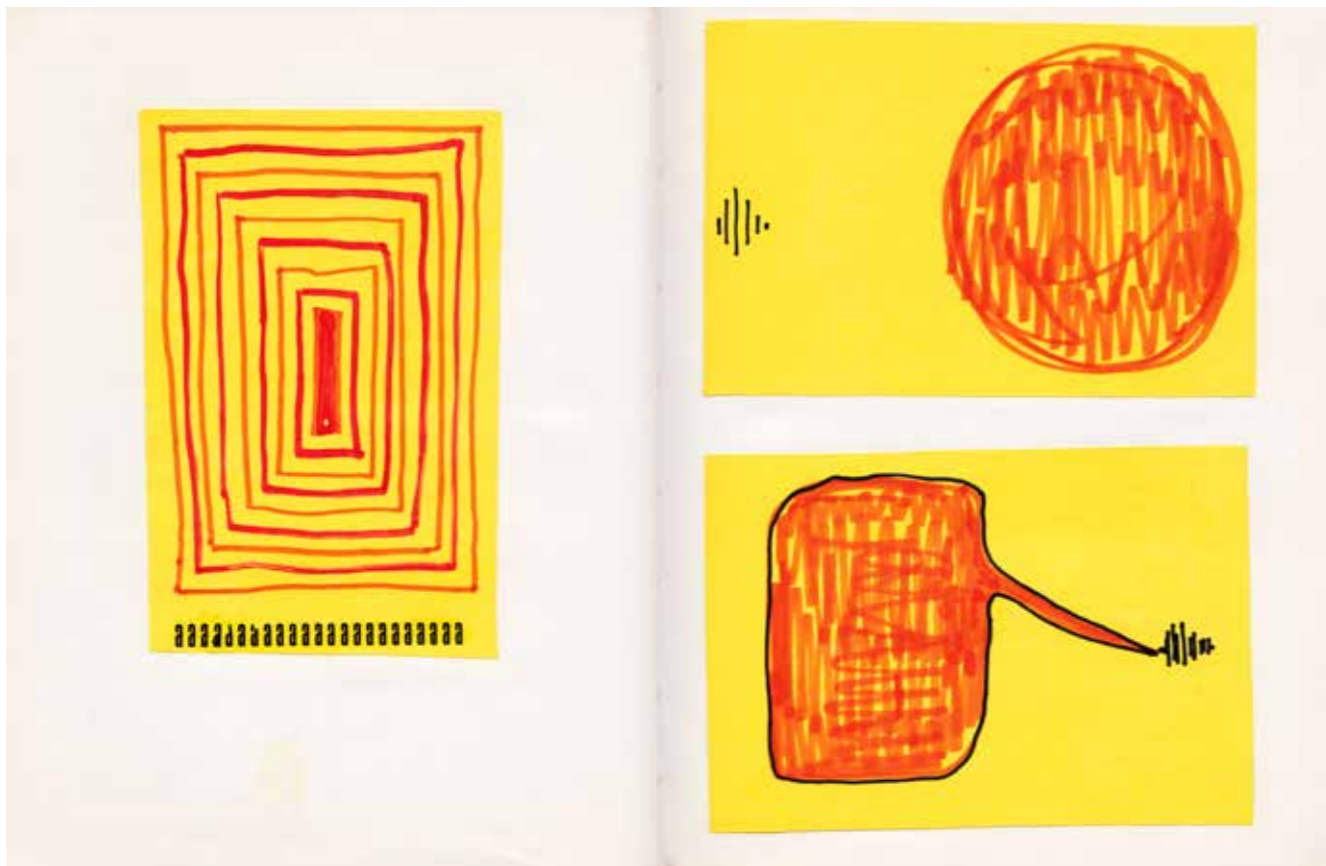
fazia diferença entre
viver e existir faz -

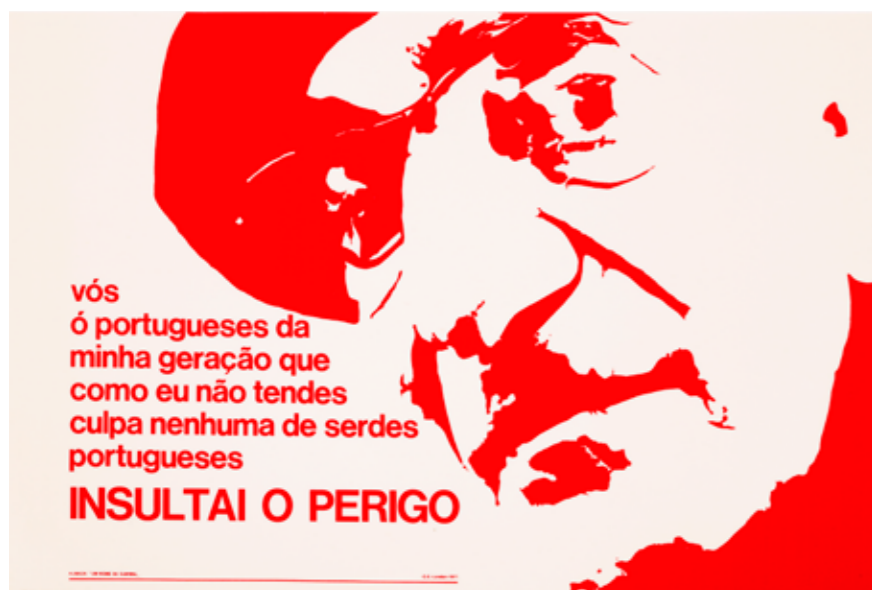
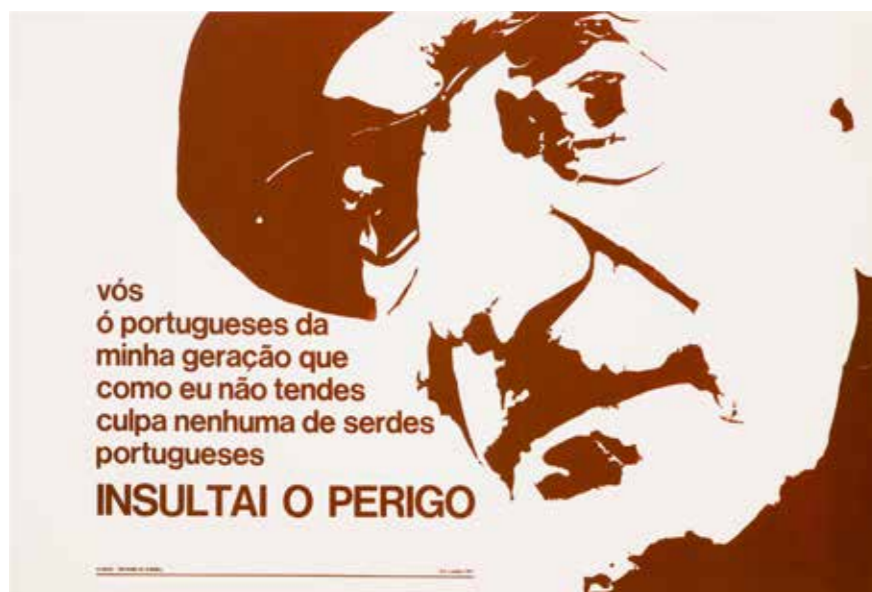


~~Ela~~ fazia diferença entre viver
e existir e, ao separar-se destes
dois verbos, um fantasma vela-
do atravessou a sombra de repen-
te. Ela via em pessoa no seu
pensamento essa maldição possível
de ter vindo a este mundo e não
ter feito parte desta vida. Havia
uma ~~grande~~ grande lacuna na
sua vida, e sentia-se afastado
do resto do mundo, como se ti-
vesse crescido a maré e ele ficasse
no mar em cima de um rochedo
sem ligação com a terra. Ele está-
va efectivamente na idade de juntar-se.
Ia muito seguro no que pensava e
atent, por isso sente a necessidade
de juntar-se.

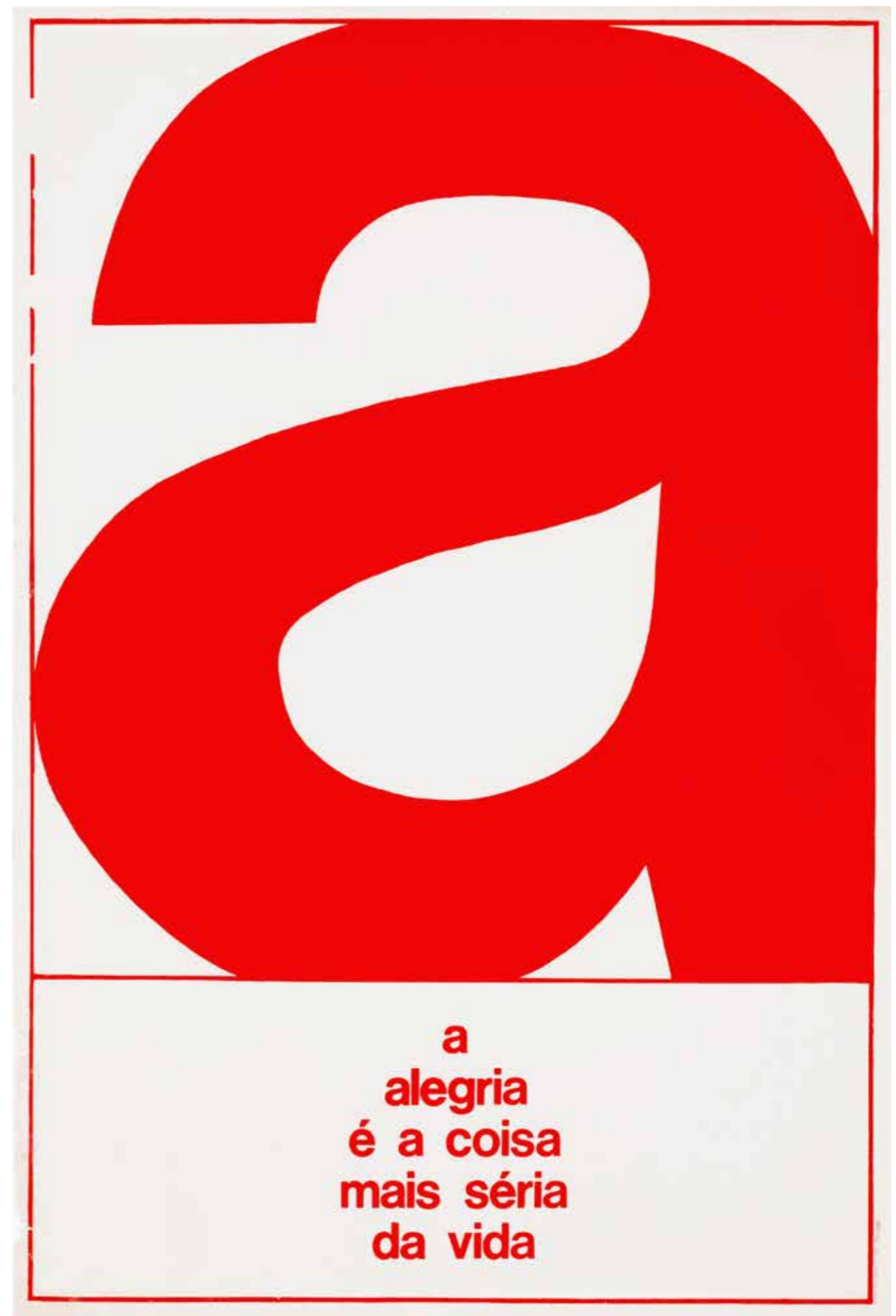
CADA QUAL VÊ EVA PELO PRIMEIRO VEZ







Posters by Carlos Gentil-Homem and Ernesto de Sousa, 1971
(you portuguese of my generation who like me are not guilty of being portuguese
INSULT THE DANGER)



Poster by Carlos Gentil-Homem and Ernesto de Sousa, 1971
(joy is the most serious thing in life)



Poster by Carlos Gentil-Homem and Ernesto de Sousa, 1971

Sinopsis do filme:

A L M A D A
UM NOME DE GUERRA

1. Título
Anúncio musical (com ruídos), síncronos com ampliações sucessivas e descontínuas da palavra ALMADA, em assinatura, do próprio, que dá lugar à frase :
UM NOME DE GUERRA
Rápida inversão musical para a sequência seguinte, enquanto a imagem funde em branco :

2. Breve silêncio. Fad in do letreiros:
A ALEGRIA
É A COISA MAIS SÉRIA
QUE HÁ

Multiplicação de G.P. de Almada em espelhos de Noronha da Costa. Das imagens repetidas, fragmentadas e paralelas, passamos a um plano final de Almada falando a Almada.

Montagem de gravações, num monólogo, como se de perguntas e respostas do próprio se tratasse.
Piano (separador musical)
Com o último plano desta seq. ouve-se, registada em MGP sonoro, o com voz destimbrada, a pergunta (de Almada a Almada):
QUEM ÉS TU
ALMADA NEGREIROS ?

3. Letreiros:
SOU EU PROPRIO

A câmara recua e filma-se ... a si própria: filma a equipa de filmagens - como se o filme tomasse consciência de si próprio. Num travelling, descobre-se Almada a trabalhar, e depois, como fundo em MGP, que pode vir da sequência anterior. Almada volta-se para a equipa de filmagens (p^a o público) e parra o seu encontro com Eugénio d'Ors, na Sociedade Ibero-Americana, em Madrid ...

... narrativa que termina com a resposta:
Sou eu próprio !
Separador musical, que inicia ...

est: mãos
desenhos legendas

** asub. av. (da. de. av.)
de Almada; as (de)
tempo plástico de
Que Viana, José Rodrigues, P.*

*"Quem filma o meu
eu? ...
Nãoficil filma o
Homem - Ledôdo
de coisas ... das pu*

Document from Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa



196) CENA 6
BOLINA 6
(SILABAS 4 CONTE 5
PROXIMA A)

1 x 2 3 4
x x x x
5 6 7 8
x x x x

ODIO

ODIO
odio
DIRIGI MEUS
ODIO

odio
ODIO
ODIO
ODIO

ODIO
ODIO
ODIO
x 20

197) CENA 6
BOLINA 6

21 22 23 24
x x x x
25 26 27 28
x x x x

Inter cinematográficamente
organizar a vida?
Aprofundar está-la, realista-la
na discussão, não pela necessidade
de diálogo artificial
mas pela necessidade de momento
deixa

DIALOGO

no inventar este filme, este
ata - filme como um tratado
para a a invenção de uma dia
obra
espera ver através dela a mala
querença
a transformar-se na
sóla vez cá na terra

no acho que todos os filmes
devem chamar - se assim - a
tal consciência!
... são pedaços de coisas,
mas e aí...
e que o amor não está pronto
vê - se perfeitamente que ainda
não é tudo

29 30 31 32
x x x x
33 34 35 36
x x x x
37 38 39 40
x x x x

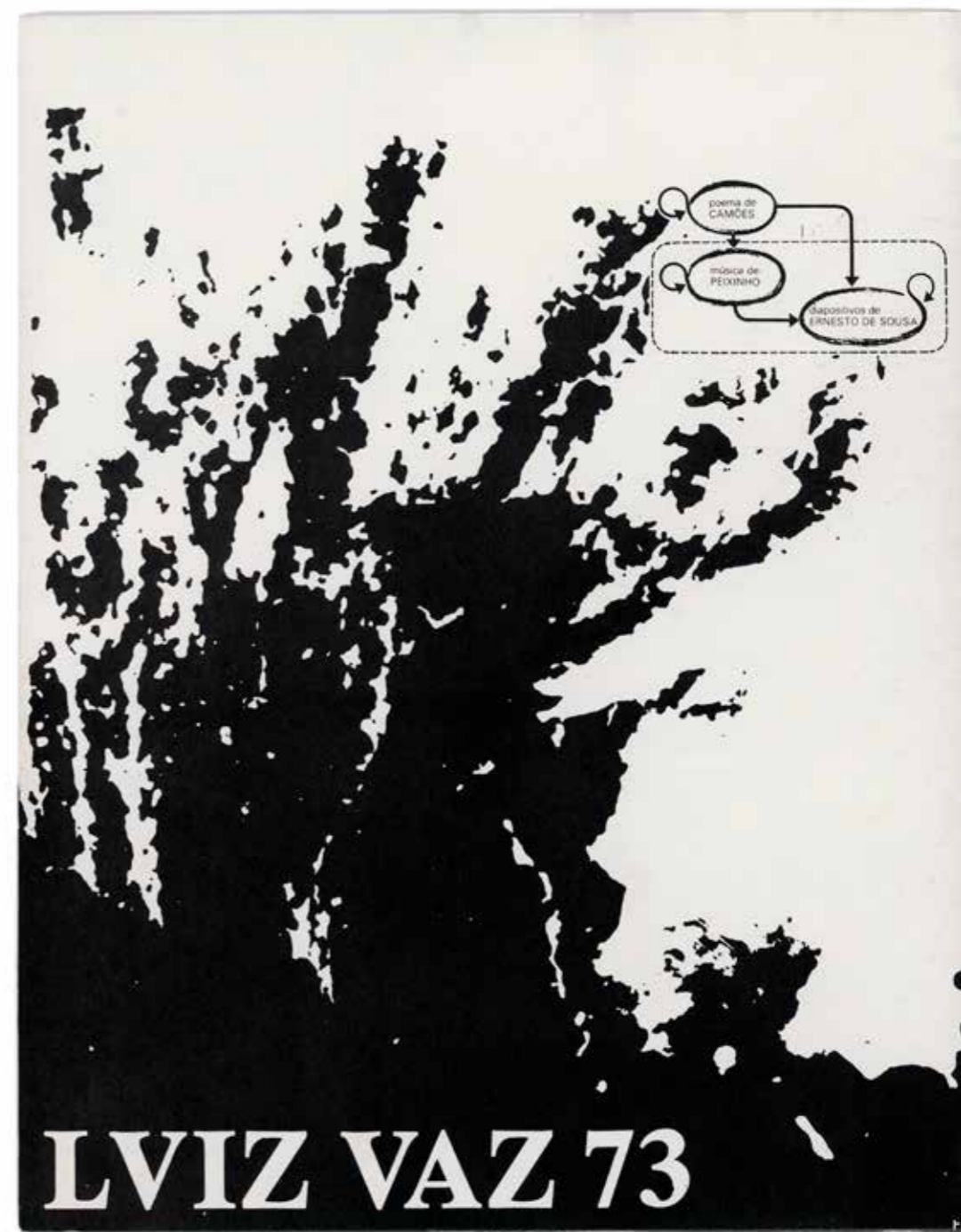
(MAS
COMO
ESCAPAR A
MECÂNICA
DAS
ACTUALIDADES)



Manuel Costa e Silva (filming), Ernesto de Sousa and Almada Negreiros in his studio filming for *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra*, 1969

Film frames from filmed sequence in Almada's studio, 1969. Almada (in the center), Carlos Gentil-Homem, Ernesto de Sousa, Rogério de Moura and Vítor Silva Tavares (right to left)

(150)



Cover of *Luiz Vaz 73*, booklet, 1976

Luiz Vaz 73 (1975)

Mixed-media work with electronic music by Jorge Peixinho, 1975.

Slide projections by Ernesto de Sousa (black and white and colour, variable between presentations) and live instrumental improvisation. Aprox. 150'.

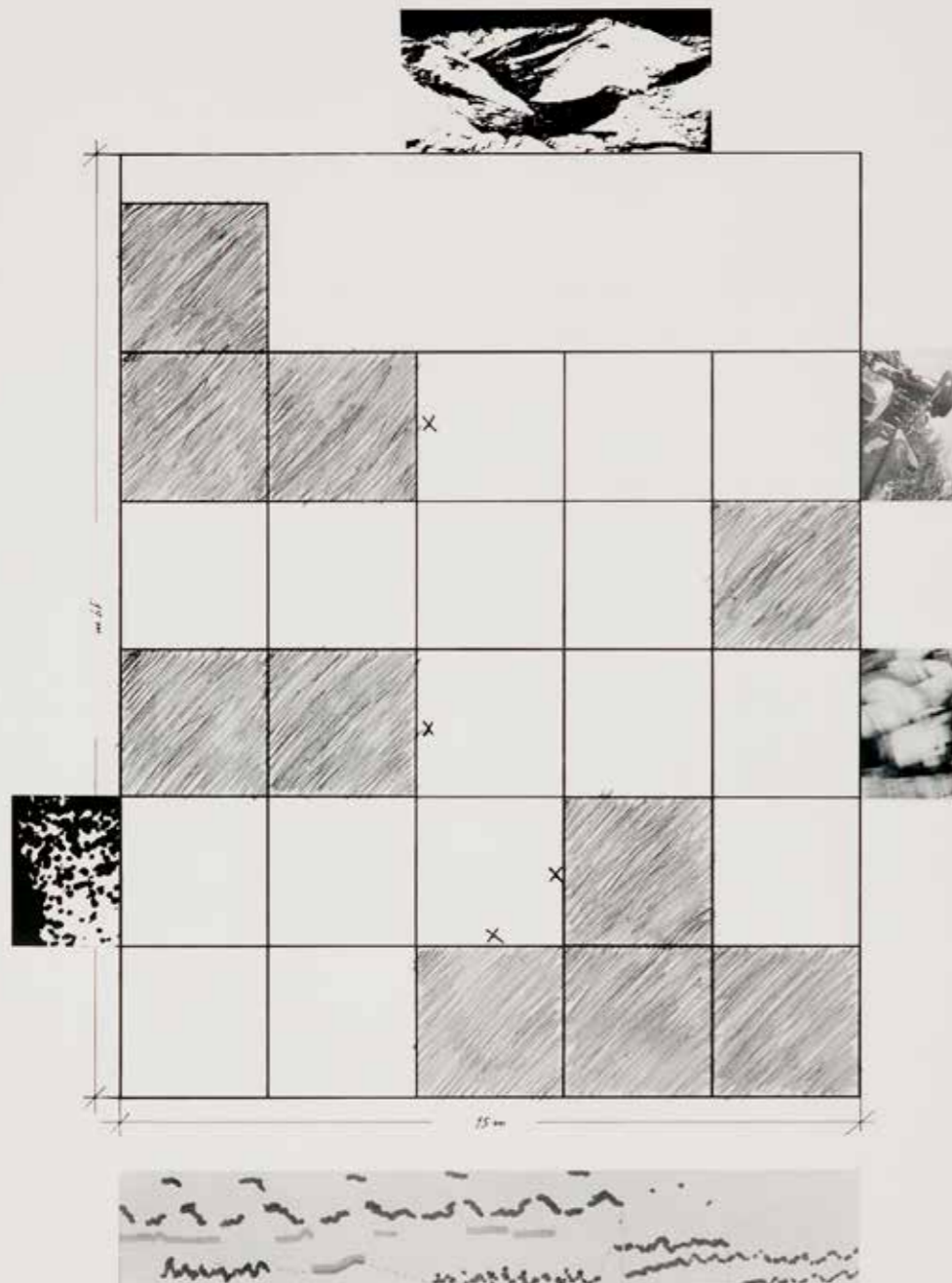
Inspired by *Os Lusíadas* by Luís Vaz de Camões.

Jorge Peixinho produced his music composition at the Institute for Psychoacoustics and Electronic Music in Ghent, Belgium, between 1973 and 1974. Some of the slides in this piece were later integrated in *Almada, Um Nome de Guerra*. All presentations featured a musical improvisation by Grupo de Música Contemporânea de Lisboa.

Presented at: 5th International Mixed-Media Festival in Ghent, Zwaarte Zaal, January 1975; 24 heures communication, Palais des Beaux Arts de Bruxelles, April 1975; Galeria Nacional de Arte Moderna, Lisbon, February 1976. Space designed by Fernando Calhau; Semana de Arte na Rua, Mosteiro de Santa Clara-a-Velha, Coimbra, June 1976; Encontro Nacional do Cinema Não-Profissional, Teatro Garcia de Resende, Évora, June 1977; 2as Jornadas Internacionais de Música Electroacústica, Academia de Música de Viana do Castelo, November 1981.

(151)

LUIZ VAZ 73 – VISUAL STRUCTURE ERNESTO DE SOUSA



LUIZ VAZ 73 / Jorge Peixinho / Ernesto de Sousa / grupo de
música contemporânea / Fernando Calhau / acção cultural

The visual structure of this work is: a) **open**, tending to constitute an involvement, or art-of-space; b) **coincidental**, alternately with the poem by Camões or with Jorge Peixinhos' music; but c) **autonomous**, due to the independent semantic formation of its own families of forms and meanings.

It is, therefore, a piece of work, which beyond certain semantic reference-stimuli is built upon the ambitions of simultaneism with unrelated events, where only the structure is coincidental. In general terms, the visual structure is based on quite precise opposites, such as ductile/hard; black/colour; contrast/continuous; eros/work (or heroism), etc.

The **openness** starts by being formal (in the sense of Baroque aesthetics), e.g. the "hard" (or the "work") that is structurally required may be **created** by images of some contemporary monstrosity, like the "corpses of cars" in certain cases, a semantic reference to the poem, will act as a pretext for the openness, e.g. Camões' reference to the flags and their painting, "muda poesia" (mute poetry), corresponds to images of Portugal of the present moment, torn political posters.

The coincidence with the music and poetry is, therefore, mainly structural, using the technique of rupture temps, rhythmic support and spatial equivalents. There is an alternative and random coincidence between the sound and optical images.

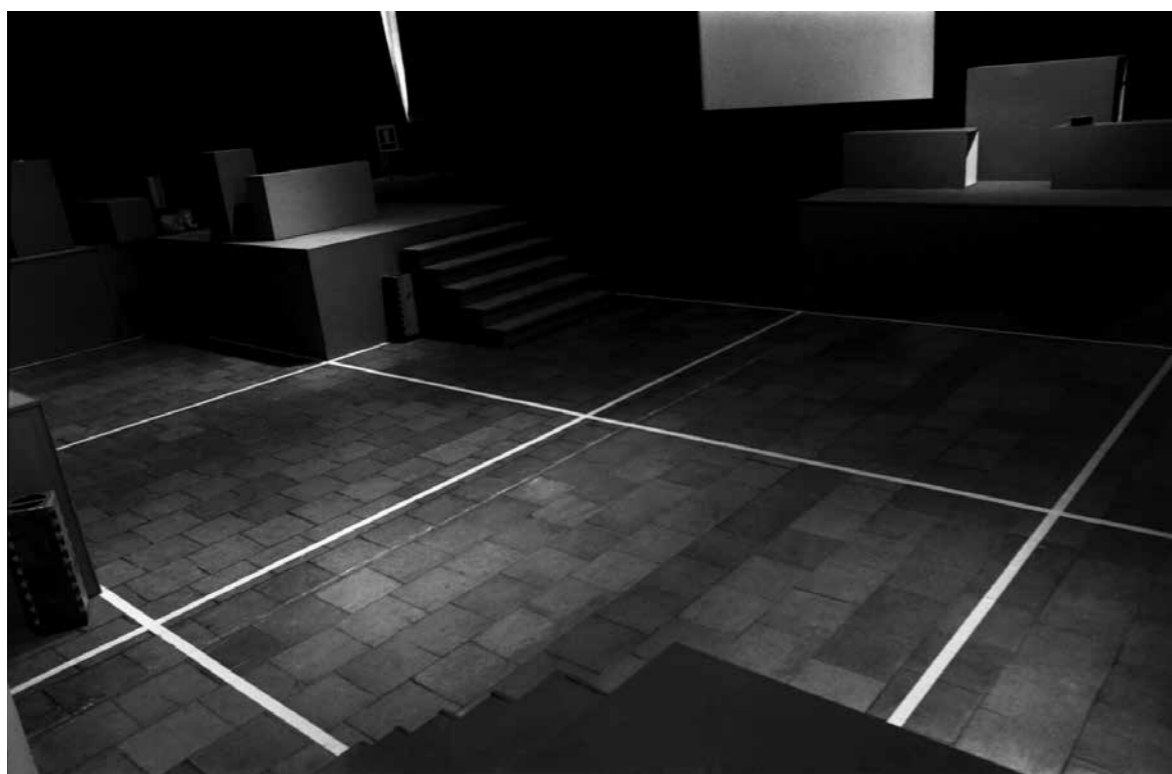
Visual autonomy (the "mute poetry" according to Camões) is motivated by a certain abstract arbitrariness, which also becomes intimate by means of the **indiscriminating** use of series of external images, such as "O teu Corpo é meu Corpo" (your body is my body) (photographs and poster dated 1973), "Os Monstros" (The Monsters) (experimental film in preparation), etc.

Just one word about the images in the intervals: they represent a redundant factor (Baroque) as regards the final dialectic meaning of this work; in its origin: the poem of Camões, who closes this so heroic narrative by confessing

... for my lyre is no longer attuned and my voice
grows hoarse, not from my song but from
seeing that those to whom I sing have become
hard of hearing and hard of heart.

(translation by William C. Atkinson, 1952)

To this "vile and gloomy sadness", the authors today have something to oppose dialectically. Something of which the embrace of Portuguese soldiers and the Guinean guerillas is a symbol and perhaps the best Lusiad proposal.



Space designed by Fernando Calhau for the presentation of Luiz Vaz 73 at Galeria Nacional de Arte Moderna, Lisbon, 1976

THE MUSIC OF LUIZ VAZ 73 JORGE PEIXINHO

1573 – Luís Vaz de Camões presents his poem "The Lusiads" in Lisbon.

As we know, the episodes comprising the description of the voyage of Vasco da Gama have characteristics, which vary greatly: historical evocation (lyrical dramatic or of patriotic exaltation) and mythological fiction (moral or symbolic in character). The mythological allegories act as a counterpoint to the "real" action (historical), setting up a perfect dialectical balance.

1973 – 400 years later, during my stay in Ghent, Belgium, I began composing a piece of electronic music inspired by and based on the poem, and which was completed in 1974.

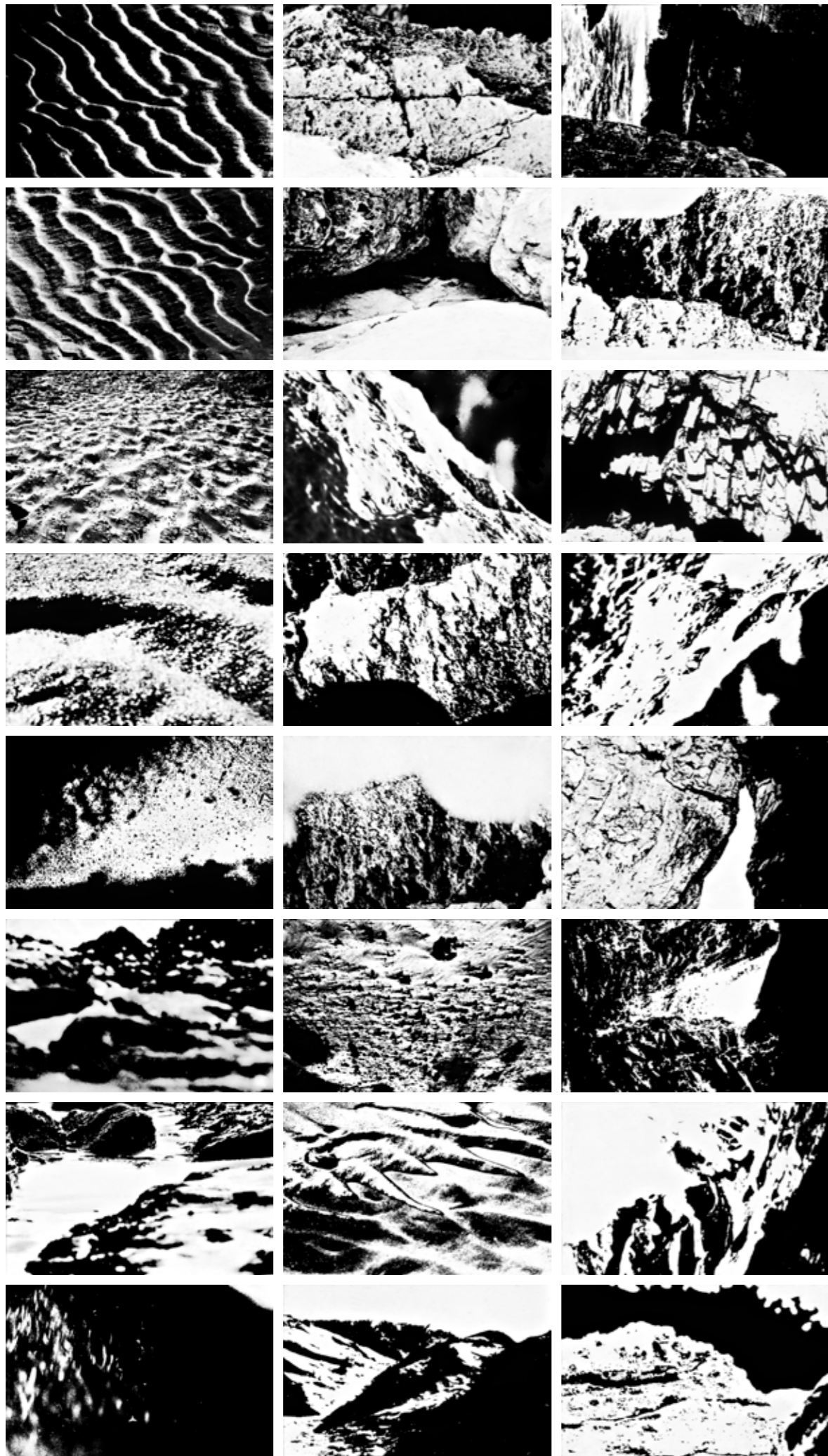
From the formal viewpoint I was particularly interested in the permanent interaction between the past, present and future and, on the other hand, the opposition between the historical and mythological levels. From an ideological point of view, I tried to project the progressive values emanating from the poem upon contemporary life and society.

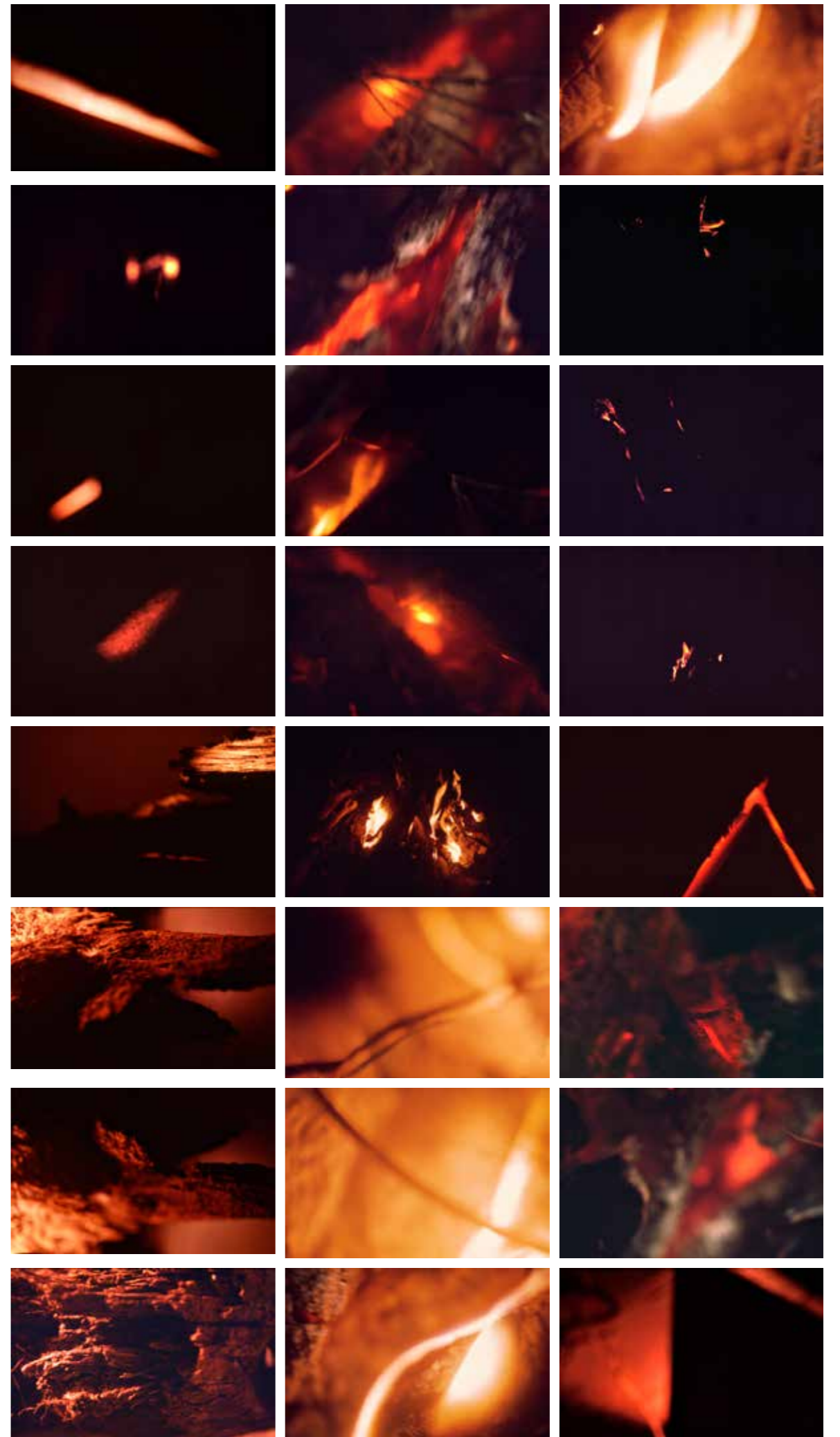
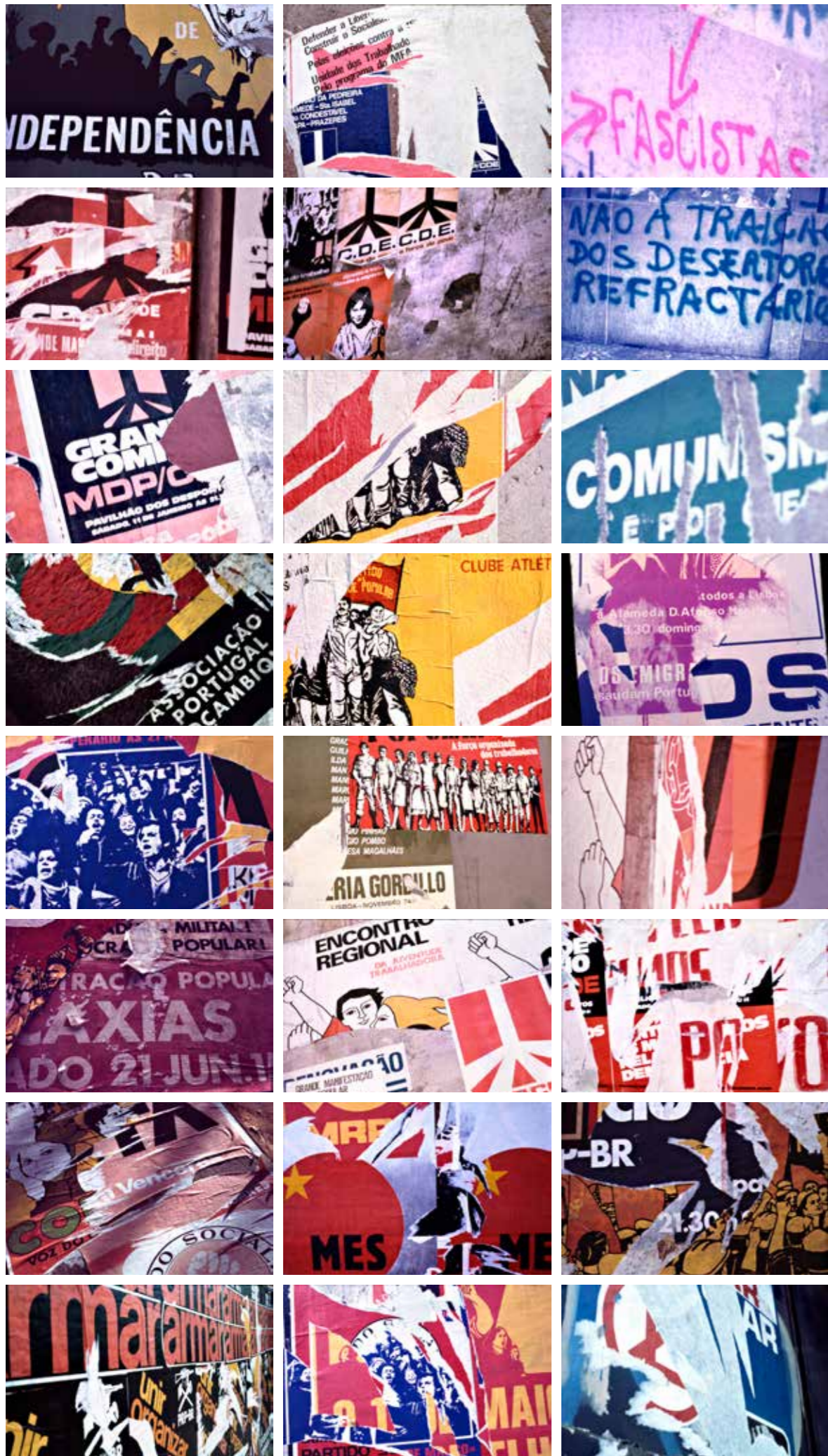
As basic material for the work I used elements of varying complexity, which I classified according to their typological character (coloured noises; sinusoidal, triangular and square waves; groups and constellations; melismatic and melodic figures; impulses; percussion; progressions and harmonic expansions; etc. On the basis of this material and its transformation, I worked out a new series of fragments, by means of superposition.

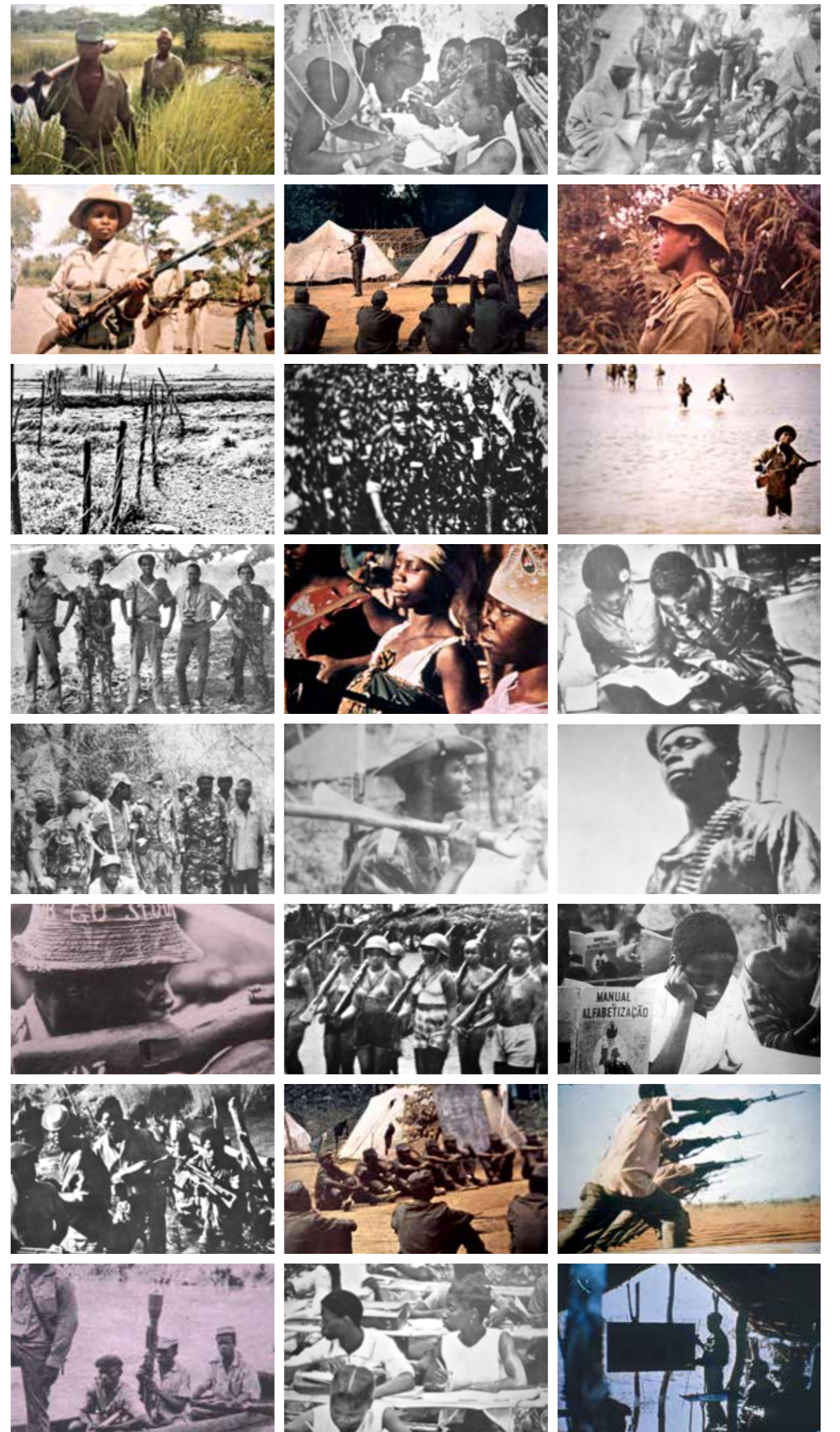
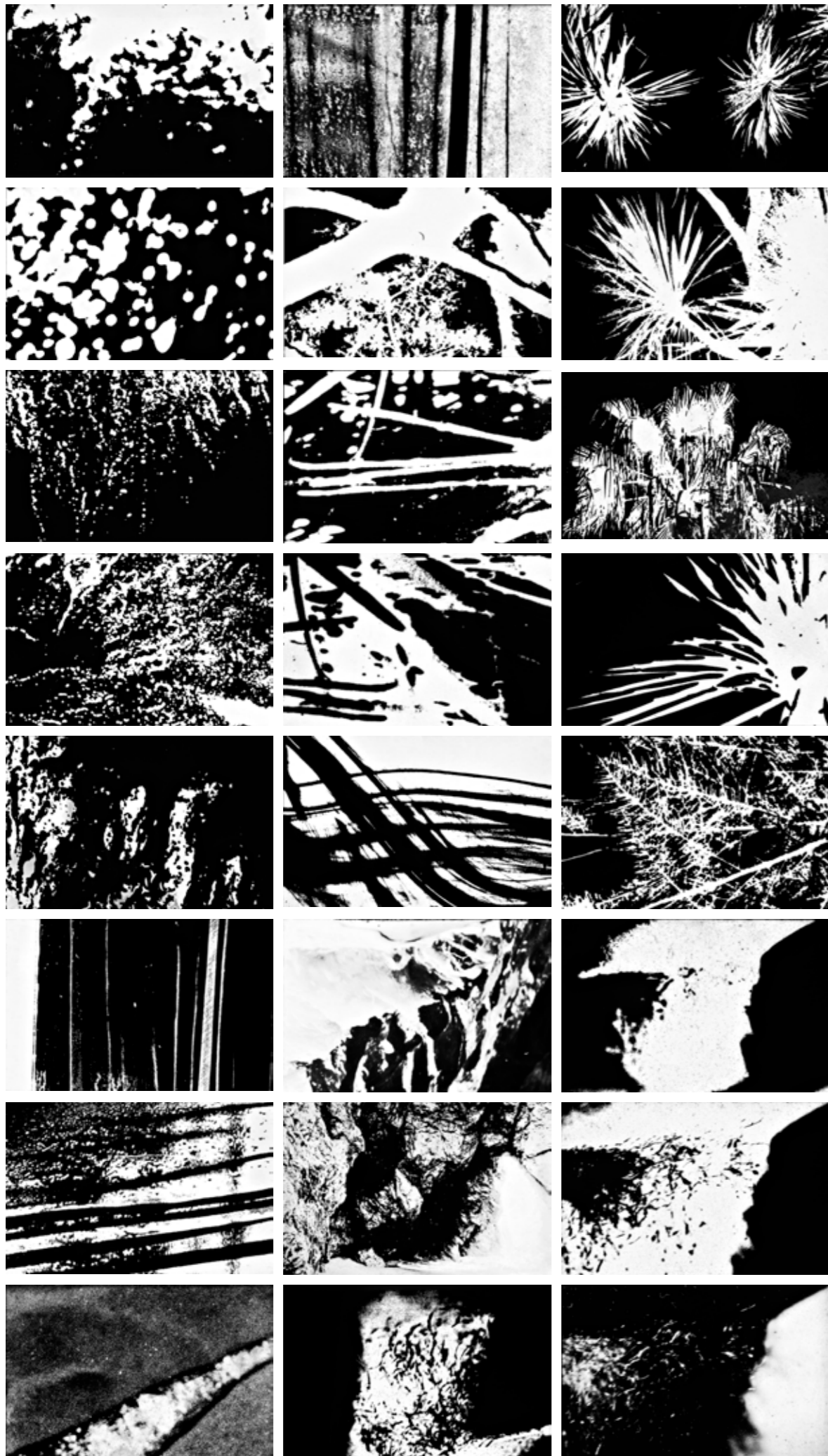
The composition as a whole arose from the final assembly of a selection of differentiated fragments (original fragments and manipulations), according to a subjective identification of the musical fragments with the more relevant episodes of the poem. This operation was carried out by means of psychological and symbolical "correspondence" between the basic sound structures and the more specific elements of the poem (historical, legendary or mythological). To this primary "correspondence" I added combinatory rules based on the behaviour of each structure towards the others and to external circumstances.

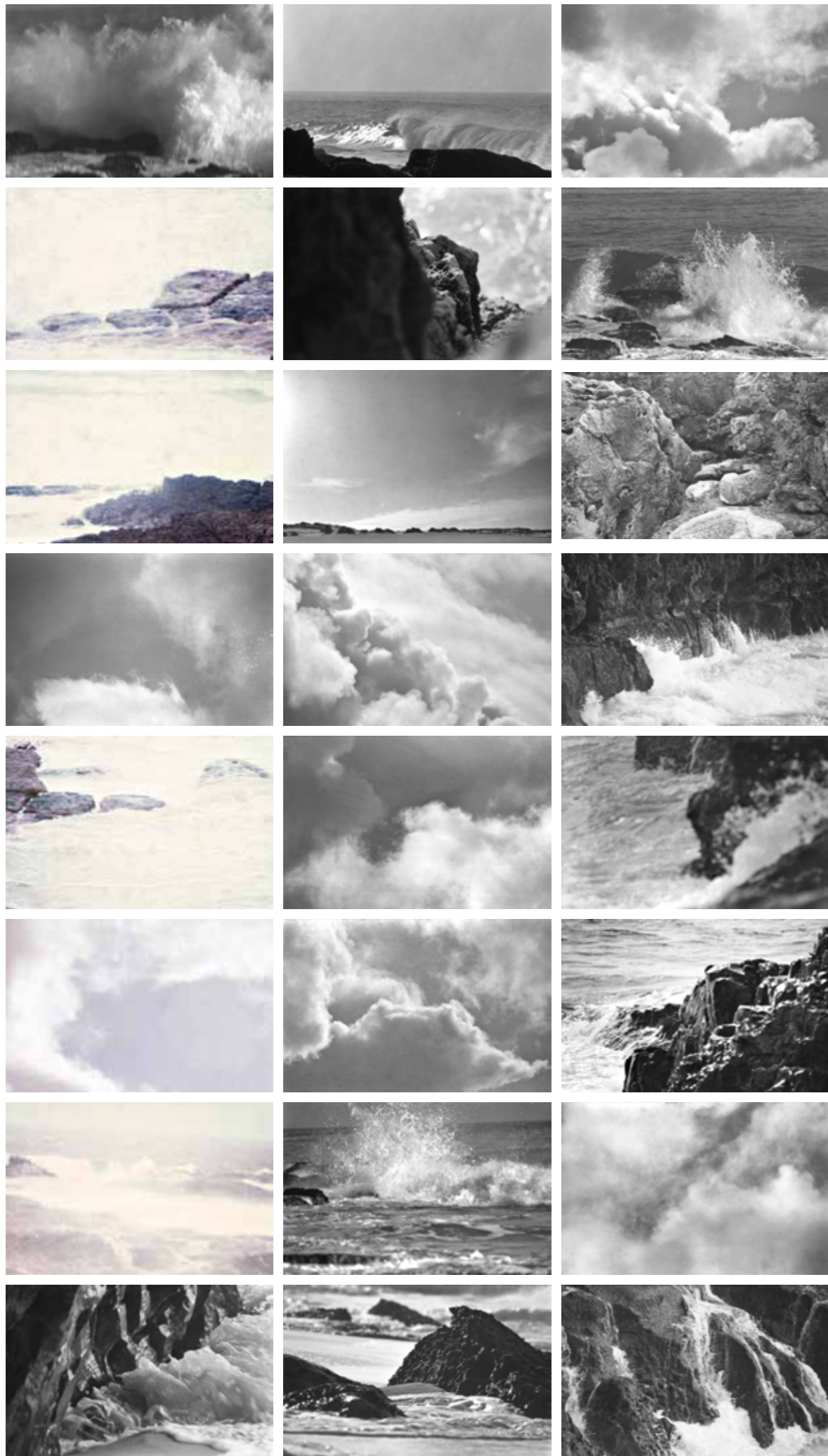
Text from Luiz Vaz 73 booklet, 1976

On pages 156-166 slides for Luiz Vaz 73, 1975, by Ernesto de Sousa Isabel Alves collection / Estate of Ernesto de Sousa











GRAPHIC ARTS, LANGUAGE AND TOTAL AESTHETICS EMILIA TAVARES

The extensive body of theory produced over the last two decades about the work and thought of Ernesto de Sousa has highlighted the exploratory and rhizomatic nature of his *praxis*. Furthermore, it has helped to put together a history of the Portuguese neo-vanguard in the post-revolutionary cultural, social and political period, while also analysing its implications within the context of a newly-established democracy.

The history of the Portuguese neo-vanguard cannot be understood simply in terms of its aesthetic and cultural components, nor can it be ascribed to a precise historical time span, since it is cloaked in a series of permanent contradictions in both its economic foundations and its social repercussions, namely those that existed between the “traumatic” period of the dictatorship and the mechanisms adopted for the establishment of a democracy that rapidly became neo-liberal in nature. The speed with which these changes took place did not allow sufficient time for due reflection, thus making it difficult to engage in a preliminary critique of capitalism and its modes of acculturation.

The aim of this essay is to contribute, in some way, to the study of this complex period, looking in particular at the culture of the image and the spread of the mass media, because, ever since the late 1950s, these had been two very important aspects in Ernesto de Sousa’s theoretical development and had greatly influenced his activism within the pre and post-revolutionary context of 1974.¹

To some extent, the aim is also to delve deeper into the study of the participation of the Portuguese artistic neo-vanguard in the Cultural Action Campaigns (*Campanhas de Dinamização Cultural*), led by the 5th Division of the Armed Forces’ Movement (*Movimento das Forças Armadas – MFA*) in the period of the PREC,² looking at the way in which Ernesto de Sousa’s aesthetic vision and his understanding of the transversal role of art did (or did not) fit in with the broad tradition of the neo-realist movement within the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), while simultaneously examining its importance as a cultural and political opposition to the dictatorship of the *Estado Novo*.

The cultural and artistic context prior to the 1974 revolution largely reflected the complex ambivalence that existed between the prevalence of paralysing aesthetic models, hotbeds of political and aesthetic insubordination and a vast generation of exiles, especially in Paris

and London, who, through the grants and scholarships that they were awarded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, had been able since the 1960s to frequent the most prestigious international art schools, with some of them going on to become leading figures in the Portuguese neo-vanguard. The 1974 revolution was to restore the aesthetic potential that the dictatorship had either ignored or expelled, albeit not without an inevitable confrontation with the conservative cultural forces that still persisted in Portuguese society.

Within this complex framework, the new information theories and the greater spread of the mass media offered entirely new fields for experimentation, even though the socio-political criticism of the capitalist visual culture, which was beginning to take shape internationally, was afforded a somewhat erratic approach in Portugal, due to a dictatorial historical context that had resulted in widespread illiteracy in all fields, ranging from the written text to the image.

At the same time, the criticism of the mass media and the new information theories were being generated in the context of a much vaster political culture that was opposed to the spread of capitalist models, especially in the control of subjectivation, through what Felix Guattari was to refer to as the *media-based imaginary*. In the Portuguese case, such control was more deeply rooted in the dictatorial political model than in any specific economic model. Here the cultural and artistic context was subject to heavy censorship, leaving the mass media and their modern uses to perform the very concrete role of regulation and the production of propaganda, which, at the time when the *Estado Novo* was established in 1933, had been defined as part of the “politics of the spirit”³ put into practice by the National Propaganda Secretariat, directed by António Ferro.

The technologies of image production were fundamental for the construction of an imaginary for the regime and of a strong national identity, but the models for their creation and dissemination were subject to evident ideological constraints, resulting in a deep-rooted “visual illiteracy”, which was to be one of the many cultural fronts that the 1974 revolution sought to tackle.

Two important artistic conjunctures, occurring between the late 1950s and the early 1970s, had contributed to a conceptual and artistic development in the areas of image and language: on the one hand, there was the influence of Brazilian concrete poetry, embodied in the

movement of Portuguese experimental poetry PO.EX.⁴; and on the other hand, there was a photographic culture that was breaking away from the tradition of “salon photography”, with the evident deterioration of its cultural and social foundations in favour of the duality between a current of formal purism and another of conceptual affirmation, thus becoming central in the construction of a neo-vanguard aesthetics.⁵

From the mid-1950s onwards, Ernesto de Sousa accompanied and contributed to the reflections taking place about the new information and language theories (semiotics and structuralism), which were particularly well-developed within the movements of experimental poetry and conceptual photography, while also displaying an expressive interest in the new mass communication technologies, such as printing, graphic arts or advertising. These conceptual and formal changes were also accompanied by his latent politicisation, which can be documented through some of his activities between the late 1950s and the 1970s.

2. THEORETICAL GROUNDS AND INFLUENCES – THE OPEN WORK

The international climate of the increasing artistic politicisation of the neo-vanguard, overlapping with the great protest movements, such as May 1968 and the opposition to the war in Vietnam, was accompanied in Portugal by a growing, albeit clandestine, opposition to the colonial war,⁶ due to the exacerbation of the fighting taking place at its various fronts. This led to ever greater social and political agitation and was one of the factors behind the evident ideological collapse of the *Estado Novo* regime.

In Portugal, the 1960s marked the beginning of the end of one of the longest surviving European dictatorships, which was reflected in the artistic and cultural atmosphere. This period brought the affirmation of a somewhat timid neo-vanguard, practising an experimentalism that was opposed to the late-naturalist aesthetic tradition promoted by the regime. On the other hand, the neo-realist movement, which, since the 1940s, had displayed an attitude of aesthetic and political opposition, was becoming exhausted in its internal debates about form versus content, even though it was still to enjoy some preponderance in the post-revolutionary period, as we shall see.

Ernesto de Sousa, who had begun his critical activity during this period, was to abandon his realistic vision of art and an orthodoxy of meaning in favour of the critical practice of all art, an essential focus of all of his future cultural activism. As José Miranda Justo said, the key concept behind all of Ernesto de Sousa's future action was to be “modern”, a term that “applied to a wide and multifarious set of interventions belonging to what was known as the avant-garde – not strictly in the sense of its being pioneering with respect to artistic action, or being ahead of the crowd, so to speak, but actually much more than that: demonstrating a powerful capacity for understanding the heterogeneity of the various “yous” in order to initiate revolutionary transformations in every field of life, including art (...)”⁷

His contact with the international reality, throughout the 1960s, was fundamental for consolidating his thought and action in relation to the questions of mass communication, as well as information and language

theories. Bruno Munari, Umberto Eco and Marshall McLuhan were three major references in his notes and in the courses that he taught,⁸ in which he included the complementary approaches of these authors. His interest in communication theories, semiotics and structuralism were to lead him to expand his sources in a permanent and constantly updated fashion, but some basic ideas nonetheless persisted throughout his activity in the 1960s and 1970s, in which he continuously established connections between the questions of modern communication and the development of Portuguese society.

The first of these questions was related to the revolution that was brought by the new “audiovisual” media and the expanded field of the text as a form of visual, sound-based and language-based experimentation. Besides the theoretical questions underlying these ideas, both of them implied a transformation of social relationships and became fertile areas for possible ideological combat.

In an undated text,⁹ entitled *Cultura Moderna/Comunicação Audiovisual*, he mentioned the “grandmaster” in relation to these subject-matters, Bruno Munari, stating that the “audiovisual includes all the traditional means of notification and communication, and it assumes the consequences of a revolutionary series of new techniques: photography and the new techniques of graphic reproduction; radio and, generally speaking, the recording of sound and its broadcasting at a distance; cinema and a whole series of inventions in the field of image projection; television, and that wonder of communicative intimacy that the video transmission can be.” His readings and his presence at the exhibition *11 Giorni di arte Collettiva a Pejo*, in 1969,¹⁰ highlight the influence that Italian culture had on him in the areas of design and information theory,¹¹ especially in the appropriation that he made of the concept of the “visual operator” (Bruno Munari), as the mediator between visual research and the audience.

He also analysed the complex context in which communication takes place in contemporary societies and the transformations in the “space and time in which we live, the city and the road, as well as our intimate life.” He quoted Marshall McLuhan in order to evoke the “street as a classroom without walls” and attached great importance to the concept of *involvement* that Munari developed in his theoretical works and practices. He also mentioned that this is a “new and ill-defined subject”, especially in developing countries, when rapid consumption begins to take place, together with the rapid obsolescence of objects and ideas, myths and values.” In this whirlwind of change, what was needed was the mediation of specialists in communication, and he advocated that such people should also be “inventors of new codes”.

In later references, in 1978,¹² the concept of *involvement* was reconsidered under the influences of the Americans Allan Kaprow and John Cage, but also of the Fluxus movement and of performance, with this subsequently being completed with simultaneousism, participation and *assemblage*, certainly through his more direct contact with some personalities from the European neo-vanguard and his crucial visit to the *5th Kassel Documenta*, in 1972. This was the same year that he gave a talk at the Portuguese Centre in Vigo,¹³ in which the poster and the audiovisual were the central themes, debating questions such as the effects of optical involvement and the peripatetic nature of both

[...] A text by Ernesto de Sousa, “Artes Gráficas, veículo de intimidade”, from 1965 (“Graphic arts, vehicle of intimacy” [see p. 95 in this issue of *OEI*]), can be considered one of the first reflections [in Portugal] on an ethical art with social and political aspirations, the material for the construction of a collective art, of “*empirical plenitude*, through which individual subjectivity is formed, altered and reformed, in a unique and intersubjective world”. Even more radically, the author concludes that graphic arts are the “vehicle of intimacy among human beings” and that the “graphic art work (such as cinema, for example), precipitates the end of the divisions between the different forms of art, between literary arts and visual arts”, aligning his analysis with some of the facets of the international avant-garde culture.

Following the same line, the author would later write a critique of the *Salão Nacional de Arte Fotográfica de 1969*⁴ (the 1969 National Salon of Photographic Art), in which he clearly defends photography as a process, and as one of the most effective means to deconstruct the isolated work of art, still pursued by the *salonists*. He gives examples of Helena Almeida, Nuno Siqueira, and Victor Fortes as artists representing another language, one directed towards the “deconstruction of painting as isolated object”.

Print-making and photography, all the works based on mechanical reproducibility overcame their traditions as minor arts and were affirmed as the instruments of the demise of the separation between the arts, and, even more, as having the capacity to establish themselves as the center of a new social and neo-avant-garde notion of art.

[...] [Ernesto de Sousa's text for] the exhibition *18x18 – Nova Fotografia*, 1978 [see “The ‘New’ Photography” on page 205 in this issue of *OEI*] [...] shifts all the representational idea of the photographic object into its structuralist sphere of psychoanalytic interpretation. Ernesto de Sousa conceives photography in the spheres of memory and desire, stating that: “in a more general approach, new photography is connected to memory, the (non) death of memory, and the suspension of desire. (...) Photography does not imitate the gaze, it puts it in suspension”.

According to this particular position, photography is no longer decided by its materiality, or by the full negative. Ernesto de Sousa investigates the constitutive nature of image as he integrates other, not aesthetic, disciplines in his analysis and theoretical statements.

[...] *Alternativa Zero* can be considered as one of the founding exhibitions of a neo-avant-garde artistic vision, in which photography is represented as a semiotic process. Nevertheless, other previous solo and group shows placed photography in the center of artistic process, as was the case of *A Fotografia na Arte Moderna Portuguesa* [1977], or, a year later, the exhibition *A Fotografia como Arte – A Arte como Fotografia*.

Many artists, most of which the recipients of Gulbenkian's scholarships, were the protagonists of a significant change in the national artistic panorama, incorporating photographic experimentalism in different artistic expressions.

Among those, stand out the ones who produced consistent results in this domain, as was the case of Fernando Calhau, with his solo show at FCG in 1975, where he presented a series of photographs, and with his exhibition *Night Works* at the SNBA, presenting photography works.

Ernesto de Sousa, as we have seen, defines a fundamental theoretical corpus on the transformations of this decade's visual culture. At the same time, he also produced a neo-avant-garde body of work in the field of mixed media, with pieces such as *Luís Vaz 73*; *Almada, um nome de guerra*, or *O teu Corpo é o meu Corpo*.

Other artists explored photographic conceptualism, as were the cases of Julião Sarmento, Vítor Pomar, or Ângelo de Sousa. Helena Almeida introduced a singular language of rupture of the omniscient presence of the artist in the perception of the work of art, subverting the dimensional nomenclature of the artwork's production and reception.

Although in different contexts, Eduardo Nery, Cruz-Filipe, and Noronha da Costa subverted the canons of representation and perception between photography and painting, between reality and the oneiric. Alberto Carneiro used photography, integrating it in his land art pieces, as a space of intersection between the natural and the cultural. Leonel Moura made use of the apparatus of mass culture in his efforts to question cultural identities.

Some of these artists started exhibiting their work in the late 1960s, but it was only in the second half of the 70s, after the revolution, that they affirmed themselves artistically in several solo and group shows, and, in some cases, representing Portugal in the international Biennials of Venice and São Paulo.

Many other artists, in one way or another, opted to invest their efforts in the potential of photography for an aes-

thetical rupture. Ana Vieira, Artur Rosa, Monteiro Gil, António Palolo, João Dixo, and José Conduto are good examples of this group.

[...]

processes, and their capacity to generate new times of perception, such as the interaction between concrete time and harmonic time.

It should also be mentioned that, despite the cultural and political constraints, design established itself in a contemporary fashion in Portugal, through a generation of authors, with whom Ernesto de Sousa worked and socialised, such as Carlos Gentil-Homem, Manuel Rodrigues, Sena da Silva, Sebastião Rodrigues, Victor Palla and Armando Alves, among others, leaving room for a modern understanding of mass communication, not just from an aesthetic point of view, but also in the politicisation of its contents. In the 1960s, when Ernesto de Sousa also produced some of the most relevant essays on communication theories, there also occurred in Portugal, as José Bártolo said, “an important renewal of the understanding of design (...) The exhibitions of graphic arts that were held in that decade expressed that very renewal, associated with a new awareness of the discipline, now progressively emancipated from painting, and politically more resistant to the politics of the *Estado Novo*.” These were aspects that showed the beginnings of a greater visibility, but also a growing theoretical production.¹⁴

In keeping with these influences, Ernesto de Sousa adopted a political understanding of the mass media from two points of view: on the one hand, as a possibility for a “new” instrumentalisation, especially of the audiovisual media, incorporating them into a pedagogical practice designed to train the bases of society, which the 1974 revolution sought to develop; on the other hand, as was mentioned in a text dated December 1974 (?)¹⁵ (written amidst the great revolutionary fervour), adopting a criticism of these same media as vehicles of a “degradation of the literary and artistic culture”, when used within the framework of a bourgeois culture of elitism and social subjugation, “declaring war on the hypocritical paternalism of ‘puppets for the people’”.¹⁶

It was, therefore, a question of integrating the latest international theoretical upgrades in order to construct a model of “action arts”, in which photography and video, but also graphic arts and experimental poetry, could be the fundamental elements for achieving the Marxist utopia of a culture developed at the very foundational roots of society, contradicting all the elitist class-based lucubrations. Lying at the root of that thinking, and in the very foreground, was communication, in a heterogeneous sense, allied to innovation, with it being stated that today “the great model of human sciences (such as art) is linguistics, semiotics, the science of signs (...) There is only one path to be taken against the consumerism and alienation that threaten us: to destroy goods in favour of actions, forms in favour of processes, things in favour of methods, to invest our surplus (intellectual and physical) energies in festivities, eroticism, gambling, donations and free delivery.”¹⁷

In this way, Ernesto de Sousa engaged in an interpretation of the international information theories, taking into account the national context of enormous levels of illiteracy (both textual and visual), placing the stress on the idea of the *mediator*, who would be transformed into the “aesthetic operator”, geared towards a pedagogical function of teaching visual communication, thus recovering the fight of Brecht’s school, which was also claimed by Munari’s circle, against visual illiteracy, in defence of a constant learning of the codes of the image, leading to a greater awareness of its social and ideological power.

Some of his most important projects at that time developed artistic practices in which he explored the whole semiotic and technical nomenclature of the poster, in its singular condition or in conjunction with other typologies, as well as the integration of the audiovisual media (cinema, slide projections, sound), in order to establish the idea of “a total work of art”, built upon the plurality of media as an exercise of creative freedom that would be capable of generating the same perceptive sense of freedom. His action was to be decisive in the sense of permanently breaking away from museum models, which were contemplative and passive from the spectator’s point of view, requiring a response of critical understanding from the latter as a fundamental part of a dialogue with what he considered to be “action arts”, those that come closer to the formation of the subject’s intersubjectivity and lead to the inevitable establishment of inferential horizons.

In this sense, Ernesto de Sousa was not only a producer/creator of posters, but also a compulsive and heterogeneous collector,¹⁸ fully aware of the communicational richness of this support, as well as of its enormous potential for circulation as an object that could be shared without any economics-based models being related to its value, since this only existed in the sphere of its infinite capacity for being exchanged and reproduced.

In the same way, some of his mixed-media projects from this period invoked the theoretical model of Umberto Eco’s “open work” (1962), which is referred to in many of his notes, and most directly with the project entitled *Luiz Vaz 73* (1975).¹⁹ In the script and presentations of the project, it is clearly stated that “The visual structure of this work is a) **open**, tending to be constructed as an “involvement”, or, in other words, as art-in-the-space; b) **coincident**, alternating with Camões’ poem and Jorge Peixinho’s music; but also c) **autonomous**, because of the semantically independent formation of its own families of forms and significations. It is, therefore, a work that, besides some semantic references–stimuli, is constructed or developed according to the ambitions of simultaneousism; unrelated events, where only the structure is coincident and, generally speaking, the visual structure is based on very precise oppositions, such as ductile/hard, black/colour, contrast/continuous, Eros/work (or heroism), etc.”²⁰

The concepts that he expressed and the work that he produced were all the more relevant, as they were defended at the very beginning of the revolutionary process, when the nature of the participation of the artists and of a generation who were more committed to the avant-garde initially showed great promise, but rapidly turned into a demoralising affair, being marked by a complete lack of success, as we shall see.

IMAGE AND WORD – FORMS OF THE FUTURE

An essay by Ernesto de Sousa, *Artes Gráficas, veículo de intimidade* (1965),²¹ [see page 95 in this issue of *OEI*] clearly defined the incorporation of the author’s many theoretical influences in the field of communication and language, consisting of summaries of the many other articles and scattered notes that we have been mentioning. It was the contents of this essay that were to guide some of the main mixed-media projects that

he developed during this period, and which were also defended by Ernesto de Sousa in the practical terrain of the implementation of a cultural revolution. Images and words were explored by the author in a broad and continuous fashion, seeking what he defined as a “place of artistic and literary synthesis” and a means for achieving “absolute aesthetics”.

Ernesto de Sousa’s interest in photography dated from the 1940s and was based not only on a documentary perspective for the study of the history of art, but also on an aesthetic approach to a critical reality, through the photographs that he produced on themes still linked to a neo-realist set of ideas, of which the film *Dom Roberto* is a transformative epilogue. In the 1960s and 1970s, we witnessed a clear turning point in the thinking and photographic projects undertaken by Ernesto de Sousa, with these becoming incorporated instead into a multidisciplinary discourse opposed to the elitist idea of the unique work of art, and exploring its reproducible nature, as a privileged means of drawing closer to a collective form of art.

In this sense, Ernesto de Sousa contributed to a new formulation of photography, influenced by its connotative nature and receptive to its ontological contributions between copying and originality. He promoted, exhibited and debated the work of artists who, in a divisive way, used photography for new aesthetic formulations, such as Helena Almeida or Alberto Carneiro, categorically abandoning the two developments in the history of Portuguese photography during this period, which we referred to previously, namely the anachronistic purism of salon photography and a recovery of the modernist-inspired “straight photography”.²²

Another important point is that Ernesto de Sousa encompassed photography in a broader language of graphic arts and mixed media, with which he would later construct his philosophy of art. All of the technological means of representing reality are, in his view, not a guarantee of its objective understanding, but instead an intrinsic process of discovery between experience and the explanation of the world, a “movement of fusion between the objects of our knowledge and their intimate, subjective experience.” They therefore constituted powerful contributions to the creation of models of intersubjectivity in the relationship with art and life, and their consequent importance in the establishment of an art of relationship, opposed to all the paradigms of the division of the sensible.

Ernesto de Sousa brought all of these references together by constructing didactic essays that also contained a degree of direct intervention, being heavily influenced by psychoanalysis and psychology (Henri Wallon), by the phenomenological theories of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gaston Bachelard, and by the sociology of Marcel Mauss, highlighting the role of the artist in a dynamics that today we would describe as being based on relationships.

Some key ideas from the phenomenology of perception were later to offer theoretical support for his more important actions in the field of mixed media and the committed fusion between the word and the image, as in *Nós Não Estamos Algures* (1969), *Almada, um nome de guerra* (1969–1972), *Luiz Vaz 73* (1975) and in the activities that he engaged in as part of the cycle *O teu corpo é o meu corpo* (1972–1988).

In all of these works/actions, photography is understood from a new ontological viewpoint, assuming,

according to Merleau-Ponty, that “there is only room for the vision and not for the faculty of representation”, rejecting the “realist” archetypes of the image, as well as its mechanical notion of a relationship with the world and the subject, since “the image is not a simple copy, but reproduces the essence of my being. It duplicates me, together with my emotional life, and everything that makes my body a *sentant-sensible*. The image duplicates me perfectly, to the point of exhibiting me in my entirety, making my most profound and intimate secrets clearly visible.”²³

It was based on this postulate that Ernesto de Sousa claimed that the graphic arts are a “vehicle for intimacy between human beings”, empiricism and knowledge joined together in just one object, also paving the way for the constitution of an ethic in which “a body is never alone, its genesis is also the formation of other congeneric bodies in the flesh, demanding the development of a relationship with others and drawing closer to them”.²⁴

Going beyond all forms for the confrontation of dualities, such as self and other, body and soul, the body and the world, man and being, this was what Ernesto de Sousa sought to do throughout his life, appropriating Merleau-Ponty’s ontological vision, of the *chair du monde*, as the original medium in which life takes place, involving our relationships and our contact with the world. “(...) The manifestation of the other takes place between my body and the flesh of the world.”²⁵ This ethic and perception of the body would later be developed by Ernesto de Sousa in a militant fashion, in many of the happening and mixed-media projects already referred to, always being based on an idea of original sociability, in which “there is in us a being-of-another-person-to-me,” which Ernesto de Sousa placed at the root of all artistic expressions and of the graphic arts, in particular.

In this field of creation, we also find the concept of a collective work that he considered equivalent to the medieval construction of cathedrals, as a development of the social and the universal, in a permanent labour of “forming, altering and reforming individual subjectivity in a unique and intersubjective world.”²⁶ A special role was reserved for the graphic arts, namely that of “glimpsing the future, at least as a hypothesis, where a new expressive syncretism will correspond to the “death of art” as an activity that is unique and distinct from other human activities.”²⁷ A means of achieving the “realm of absolute aesthetics, knowing that this absolute will be mediation.”

ORIGINAL SILENCE AND THE SHOUT

Another perspective for considering the emergence and urgency of the graphic arts, in the understanding of a new aesthetics, relates to the importance of the word and its use in deriding the divisions between the visual arts and the literary arts.

The defence of orality, which the 1968 text developed, was based on the same theoretical influences that had already lain behind the essay *Artes Gráficas, veículo de intimidade*. Merleau-Ponty was Ernesto de Sousa’s most consistent and recurrent reference when debating the importance of linguistics in an era of mass communication and technological progress, where technique was also “a technique of the body” (Marcel Mauss) and which called for “a constant explanation of the origin of the expression”.

The “original silence” that Ernesto de Sousa referred to so often was widely problematised by the phenomenological philosopher,²⁸ and its interpretation was based on a creative and forceful strategy (emerging from nothing) of the “primordial silence”, which, in this way, is determined by its future. Also to be found in this “original silence”, is the “critique of the still prevalent cult of the all-powerful image (from the civilisation of libraries), and of certain conceptions of a world dominated by the imaginary, of which the work of art would be an objectivation.”²⁹

The arts of communication thus favoured the “end of a theoretical and empirical monopoly of the imaginary”, the end of an aesthetic isolation among the arts, of the “creator-spectator” dichotomy, favouring the affirmation of the various arts and of direct communication. Curiously, in the television of the future, and, in other even more revolutionary processes of communication, Ernesto de Sousa saw a complete dominance of orality and the integration of all the arts, breaking the silence between individuals.

Oralidade como o futuro da arte (Orality as the future of art) lies in the postulate that “the word is a gesture, and its meaning a world” (Merleau-Ponty, quoted by Ernesto de Sousa in the already-mentioned text),³⁰ with “the use of the word [being] a signifier in itself”.³¹ By establishing a link between the word and the gesture, the path was opened for understanding communication and intersubjectivity, a place for the meeting between the self and the other, a world of dialogue where collaboration happens, “and where language constitutes an *intermonde* that allows for the other’s invasion upon my self and my invasion upon the other: there is one being composed of two, our perspectives slide into one another, we coexist through one and the same world.”³²

The graphic arts do not exist without this intrinsic relationship between word and image, the catalyst of intersubjectivity, encounter, dialogue, collaboration, coexistence and corporality, forming a vast lexicon that seeks to change the individual and society, under the influence of an evident plurality of art, without any hierarchy of discourses.

The importance of language was also one of the powerful conjunctures of the Portuguese neo-vanguard, expressed above all through the PO.EX concrete poetry movement, which, from 1964 onwards, brought together some of its most important creators, such as Ernesto de Melo e Castro, Herberto Helder, António Aragão, Ana Hatherly and Salette Tavares, among others, and which fitted in with the chronology of those reflections by Ernesto de Sousa that we have been analysing. Ernesto de Sousa socialised with, fostered and wrote about the PO.EX group, in this way establishing the link between the arts, rejecting any suggestions of primacy and of hierarchies, which, as we have seen, he considered to place restraints on the freedom of the forms of expression in favour of an absolute aesthetics.

The political significance of experimental poetry and of its genesis was also the subject of a vast theoretical output on the part of its authors, most notably Ana Hatherly. The idea of breaking the silence that Ernesto de Sousa considered to be the best way to take a stance and to act upon the world was dealt with by the author in a text that was written in 1977,³³ although, in this case, looking at things from the point of view of Wittgenstein, when she stated: “Writing is mute (...) but the same problem of the silence can also be found in other

forms of artistic expression. ‘That which can be shown cannot be said,’ declares Wittgenstein in Proposition 4.1212. And, in that assertion, one could well see an eloquent justification of all forms of visual communication. The visual poem – visual-text, image-text – is literally and literarily silent. The non-literal legibility it can attain was precisely what made it possible for the visual poem to be diffused all over the world; in the confusion and the incommunicability of languages and, concomitantly, that of civilizations and cultures.”³⁴

But it is also a political act when “the text becomes an area of struggle, a centre of divergence in relation to the context, but also in relation to its own space. The space of the text becomes a critical space, in the double sense of the word, but, above all, in the sense of a space of danger, perhaps a space in danger.”³⁵ For Ana Hatherly, by coming close to typographical writing, concrete poetry acquires an identity that is similar to that of the industrial process, being converted “into a mass technique for a mass expression (...) as well as a limit case of an expression and a form of protest against the consumer society.”³⁶ The freedom of meaning is thus seen, in generational terms, as a Marxist strategy for combating the bourgeois mental forms of intelligibility, to which the fruitful and free association between Image and Word seemed to be paving the way in Portuguese art and society.

The silence that acts as a catalyst for dialogue and the silence that paves the way for interpretation are complemented in these two approaches – both of these forms of silence seek to reaffirm the universal role of art, its communicational capacity, also as a political act. The non-verbal image is therefore a form of communication that can be turned into “a sort of *lingua franca*, a universal language.”³⁷ The effectiveness of this aesthetic statement of the contamination of meanings and artistic processes could be put to the test in the social and political context of the 1974 revolution, when the constitution of this vast artistic way of thinking gained the freedom to reconcile itself with the social change that it envisaged. We do not have enough room in this text to analyse the complexities, successes and defeats of this process, of the encounter between aesthetics and the Portuguese post-revolutionary politics, but, as a record of some of the programmatic lines of Ernesto de Sousa’s way of thinking, it is important to briefly underline his contribution to this dialogue.

ART AS A REVOLUTIONARY VALUE

Revisiting Ernesto de Sousa’s most impressive projects from the 1960s/1970s and looking at them from the theoretical perspective that has already been outlined helps us to understand their verbose nature and the militant universality of his language, whether he was dealing with posters, slides, gestures or letters. His construction of an artistic language was linked to the exercise of a complicit intersubjectivity, which was shrouded in political meaning, insofar as it always called for a smooth overlapping of meanings, the expression of a communicative power that also took the form of an ethical code.

But Ernesto de Sousa was also aware of the contradictions of an economic and political nature in the development of the mass media, and that these needed to be adapted to the context of “micro-societies”, not

adopting a reductive approach to their principles and practices. And it was this adaptation of new communicational models that were capable of generating new social relations to which he would also dedicate himself, in the very particular context of post-revolutionary Portugal.

Following the revolution of 25 April 1974, the Armed Forces, who, through their 5th Division, had been the main leaders of the military coup that led to the regime change, sought to provide a response to “the absence of freedom of information and assembly, together with the question of the incipient organisation of the political parties and forces”. This response took the form of what were to become known as *Campanhas de Dinamização Cultural* (Cultural Action Campaigns), “which would prepare the population for a civic intervention and an active participation in elections, as well as in the construction of democracy.”³⁸

Through these campaigns, roughly 10,000 activities were developed between 1974 and 1975,³⁹ with the participation of hundreds of creators, visual artists, graphic artists, writers, actors, circus artists and puppeteers, stage directors, dancers, composers, filmmakers and journalists, “covering this country with posters, paintings, murals, postcards, books, representations and all possible forms for the civic and cultural elevation of the people (...).”⁴⁰ Under the scope of this movement, the *Comissão Dinamizadora Central* (Central Mobilising Committee – CODICE) was created. Initially coordinated by Ramiro Correia and then later by Manuel Begonha, its members consisted of military personnel and civilians from various areas, seeking to clarify the wide variety of the different questions raised, in areas that ranged from agriculture to the visual arts.

Ernesto de Sousa, who participated in some of the essential meetings and assemblies held under the scope of this programme, and who presented some concrete proposals, has been excluded from the most important bibliography compiled about this subject,⁴¹ given his critical stance in relation to this Committee’s theory and practice. He made his position known very early on, and in a public manner, through a series of articles that he published in *Vida Mundial* between October 1974 and October 1975.

At stake, once again, was the confrontation between an orthodox view of art and the plural and universal meaning that Ernesto de Sousa had begun to define since the 1960s, moving away from the neo-realist set of ideas and seeking to combine art and politics under new guidelines that would further aggravate the agonising conflict between form and content defended by dialectical materialism, and in this way proposing another revolutionary aesthetic philosophy. An important reference for Ernesto de Sousa, in this regard, was the philosopher Galvano della Volpe,⁴² one of the leading intellectuals in postwar Italy, whose opposition to Lukács’ dogmatic realism was decisive, contrasting this with the cognoscitive plenitude of the artistic work linked to the sciences of the sign and information theory, in a clear defence of the communicational contamination between works of art.

Yet to be analysed are the programmatic contents of the actions undertaken by the *Campanhas de Dinamização Cultural* in the context of the artistic reality of this period, but the call made for a general assembly of artists on 9 December, 1974, was answered by such artists as João Vieira, Lourdes Castro, Alberto Carneiro

and Helena Almeida,⁴³ who belonged to a generation that had already committed to an avant-garde aesthetic discourse, together with other artists who had been the mainstays of the aesthetic opposition to the dictatorship, above all through the MUDE movement and the emblematic *Exposições Gerais de Artes Plásticas* (General Exhibitions of Visual Arts), organised between 1946 and 1956.

Previously, in May 1974, at the Sociedade Nacional de Belas Artes, the *Movimento Democrático de Artistas Plásticos* (Democratic Movement of Visual Artists) had been founded. On 10 June, Portugal Day, this movement produced a collective mural painting at the Galeria de Arte Moderna in Belém, which was known at that time as the *Mercado do Povo*, expressing a clear sign of the union of artists from various aesthetic areas and their joint involvement in the revolutionary process. And on 26 April 1975, the photographic exhibition *Portugal – um ano de Revolução 1974-1975* (Portugal – a year of Revolution, 1974-1975) was inaugurated at the Galeria de Belém, which was then taken to a series of other venues around the country. The exhibition was organised by some of Portugal’s leading photo-journalists of that time, without the inclusion of any other form of artistic expression, or the representation of any other artists, with photography remaining anchored to its documentary aspect as a representation of the revolution.

As an alternative to this context, Ernesto de Sousa’s archive includes some of the documentation that he produced with the aim of making other contributions to the artistic cause of cultural promotion embodied in the *Campanhas de Dinamização Cultural*, most notably the document *Esquema de uma Atuação Cultural, Rápida, de Ação Imediata e Eficaz de Acordo com os princípios enunciados da Comissão de Cultura e Espetáculos do Movimento das Forças Armadas* (Scheme for a Rapid Cultural Intervention, with Immediate and Effective Action in keeping with the principles outlined by the Armed Forces’ Movement’s Committee for Culture and the Performing Arts), probably dating from May 1974.⁴⁴ In it, Ernesto de Sousa defended the importance of the mass media, most importantly TV and Radio, as basic instruments in the strategy for promoting culture, in keeping with what had been his line of aesthetic production and thinking.

At the height of the revolutionary period, the main lines of the argument of his essay *Artes Gráficas, veículo de intimidade* were clearly defined, just as some of his most important mixed-media projects had already been produced, such as *Almada, um nome de guerra*, and he had already paid his important and defining visit to the *5th Kassel Documenta* (1972). In this same year, he organised the *1.0000.011º Aniversário da Arte* at the Círculo de Artes Plásticas in Coimbra and curated the initiative *Projetos-Ideias* for the AICA exhibition, in 1974, at the SNBA, in Lisbon. In this way, he had already established a repertoire of influences and an evolution of aesthetic thinking that it was difficult to reconcile with a prevailing artistic idea that was still governed by the ideological orthodoxy that the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) had imposed, when all of his energies and commitment were directed towards the concept of experimental art and its validity as a process and goal for all artistic creation.

As Boaventura de Sousa Santos said, “it was through the solution of concrete problems that the MFA was transformed into a social imaginary of liberation, at the

centre of a symbolic universe of combat against poverty and injustice". It was this symbolic expansion that lay behind the objective of the cultural action campaigns and which was considered one of the fundamental dimensions of the partnership between the people and the MFA. However, "this dimension was, undoubtedly, the aspect that was the least successful. On the one hand, little attention was paid to the cultural dimension of material shortages; on the other hand, and above all, what mattered most was the control exercised by the political parties, especially that of the PCP, and the ideological constraints that this imposed."⁴⁵

Some of Ernesto de Sousa's texts are quite enlightening about the way that he called these "constraints" into question, most notably *Intervenção Cultural e Trabalho Criativo*,⁴⁶ dating from November 1974, which also refers to the creation of a first "Centre of Revolutionary Creativity", in clear opposition to the politics and actions followed by the 5th Division and by the Directorate of Popular Culture, both of which were most heavily criticised for their "bureaucratic and revisionist opportunism and for their total absence of any political perspective".

One of his most important statements in this text drew attention to the lack of definition of the revolutionary social base of intellectuals and artists, whose organisational sense had to be brought into line with the rest of the population, countering the "dangerous ingenuities and paternalisms of the 5th Division", proposing a rethinking of society from its bases upwards, and not only in the case of intellectuals, in order to shape a genuine revolutionary creativity and to be able to declare "war on conformity, on popular social gatherings with the eternal and monotonous consumption of sleep-inducing songs." Used as a fundamental strategy were "the *agit prop* campaigns in Lisbon's working-class neighbourhoods, where the question of posters and communication was present in all activities. Communication techniques, the manual production or screen printing of posters and audiovisual techniques, seminars on the visual factor and lettering, seminars on photography and cinema."

In another text, entitled *O Domínio Cultural*,⁴⁷ published just a few months after the revolution, he considered that the preponderant control exercised by the cultural elites over the more disadvantaged classes had worsened, "there have been no transformations or proposals for structural transformation at a significant level. The consumption of culture continues to take place in two ways, both of which are repressive: calling for respectability or for entertainment." The mechanisms for the production of culture that he had previously called for were once again restated, in which the concepts of "experimental" and "unconventional" re-emerged in order to bring about the change in highbrow culture in terms of means and not in terms of ends. He produced a list of ideas and objectives that could not have been further removed from the orthodox strategy of the 5th Division, which, according to Ernesto de Sousa's line of criticism, repeated some of the models of the dictatorship of taking culture to the people, in its stagnated forms and contents, and without paying any heed to the upheavals and turmoil of the different times.

Ramiro Correia was to defend himself against these and other attacks, highlighting the various difficulties in the field⁴⁸, because of the interference of the political parties or because of the "very deep scars that fascism

had left on society", concluding that "sometimes, as might be expected, the inclusion of civilian elements in the Mobilising Committees (...) did not always match up to the forecasts", lamenting that "the cultural explosion that might have been hoped for did not exist", in his view due to the context of cultural denial and not one of cultural affirmation.⁴⁹ From the artistic point of view, a leading member of the Campaigns stated that the Cultural Actions themselves contained a contradiction, namely that "a combination of artists and military personnel is not something that is manageable; it is not possible to engage in and create culture with the military behind everything."⁵⁰

The alliance between "intellectuals and the military" was thus compromised in some of its most important facets: for Ramiro Correia "the context of cultural denial" was also related to the avant-garde, understood by the MFA as an inoperative resistance, whereas Ernesto de Sousa was already looking at a "global society", whose cultural and aesthetic challenges were radically different, with the revolutionary period being understood in an international context of a world in transition. In his analysis of the confrontation between the political moment and the artistic heritage, he stressed that "the main heirs to the great romantic (and expressionist) hope of neo-realism in the 1940s/1950s were the avant-garde, despite their divergences and contradictory statements. In fact, it can be demonstrated that one of the most significant common denominators of the current avant-garde is the fight against the elitist tendency of an art that is made by specialists and destined for the passive entertainment of the majority and the egotistical posturing of various privileged people. It is the struggle for a greater or total participation of everyone; it is the *praxis* of that famous statement by Lautréamont, the great precursor: 'Poetry must be made by all and not by one.'⁵¹

The great project of *Alternativa Zero* in 1977, an exhibition that was to be "the year zero" of that new conception of the world and its aesthetic interpretation, which Ernesto de Sousa succeeded in establishing as one of the most important and contradictory moments in the history of the Portuguese neo-vanguard, proclaimed a form of dualism between the internal provocation of experimentalism and its flip side in the form of the external provocation of the avant-garde (Umberto Eco), both of which were soon to be rendered outdated by a new economic order, a consolidated democracy and an art system that was more capitalist than ever before.

In the 1980s, other quite different paths were to be drawn up for Portuguese art, once the illusion of a shared art had evaporated with the revolutionary process. Post-modernism was to establish itself on the back of and in contrast to this euphoria, being situated somewhere between the return to the divisions of art and some legacy of subverting the canons of the art market that, by then, had been newly re-established. Contemporaneity has, however, been a fertile terrain for ensuring that the problematising thought of Ernesto de Sousa is frequently invoked and still serves as an inspiration for new creators, recreating his firm belief in *tradition as an adventure...*

Translation: John Elliot

- 1 On 25 April, 1974, a military coup brought an end to the dictatorial regime of the Estado Novo (the New State), founded in 1933, and established democracy in Portugal.
- 2 PREC (Período Revolucionário em Curso - Revolutionary Period in Progress) was given this name because it was the period during which the various political forces were defined, as well as the time when the confrontations took place between the forces of the left and the extreme left, the socialists and the moderate right. 25 November, 1975, marked the beginning of the Constitutional Process that was to lead to the installation of a parliamentary regime, resulting in the removal from power of the Communist forces.
- 3 This was the regime's strategy for a policy of cultural propaganda, which was to play a decisive role in the mental construction of the Estado Novo.
- 4 This term was used for the first time in two anthologies of Experimental Poetry, published in 1964 and 1966 and edited by António Aragão and Herberto Helder, although examples of its practice had already been provided since the late 1950s, namely through Ana Hatherly's inaugural text - O idêntico inverso ou o lirismo ultra-romântico e a poesia concreta. September 1959.
- 5 On this subject, see Emília Tavares - "Da Fotografia ao seu processo: Modernismos e Experimentalismos nas décadas de 60 e 70" in Photography. A User's Manual (ed. Delfim Sardo), Lisbon: Novo Banco e Documenta, 2015.
- 6 The Portuguese colonial war took place between 1961 and 1974 in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique.
- 7 José Miranda Justo - "A meditative flow on Ernesto de Sousa's conception of modernity (and two appendices on related matters)", see pages 85-94 in this issue of OEI.
- 8 Namely in the notes that he took for the Artistic Training Courses at the Sociedade Nacional de Belas Artes, in Lisboa, which he taught between 1968 and 1971. See Espólio Ernesto de Sousa. Cota D6, cx 55, pasta 1.10(7). Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon.
- 9 Espólio Ernesto de Sousa. Cota D6, cx 11, pasta 1.2.1(40), folhas 6655 - 6660-14F. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon.
- 10 Accompanied by Maria Antónia Palla.
- 11 In 1955, he participated in the 3rd Congress of the Italian Cultural Union, an organisation that was dedicated to the construction of a "people's culture" as a national goal.
- 12 Espólio Ernesto de Sousa - Lecture on Arte Processo ou Artes de Ação. Galeria Quadrup, Lisbon, Março de 1978. Cota D6, cx 48, pasta 1.8.1 (7). Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon.
- 13 Espólio Ernesto de Sousa - Lecture on Comunicação Audiovisual. Centro Português
- de Vigo, Março 1972. Cota D6, cx 48, pasta 1.8.1 (8). Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon.
- 14 José Bartolo - "No Futuro lá Estarás com o teu Olhar Límpido" in O Teu Corpo é o Meu Corpo/ Your Body is My Body - Coleção de Cartazes. Lisbon: Museu Coleção Berardo, 2015. pp. 47/48.
- 15 Espólio Ernesto de Sousa - O Domínio Cultural. Cota D6, cx 11, pasta 1.2.1 (40), folhas 8125-8130^A. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon. The folder contains a reference stating that the text was accompanied by another one dated December 1974, although it may have had a later date.
- 16 Exhibition of Henrique Manuel - A metamorfose das imagens massificadoras, s.d., in Espólio Ernesto de Sousa. Cota D6, cx 58. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon.
- 17 Ernesto de Sousa - Novação Formal, 31 December 1973 in Espólio Ernesto de Sousa. Cota D6, cx 68, pasta [0869 a 0872- 2E]. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon.
- 18 In 2015, a retrospective exhibition was held about his production and collection of posters, at the Berardo Museum, in Lisbon, highlighting their importance in the general context of his work and thought.
- 19 This project was based on Luís de Camões' epic poem Os Lusíadas (The Lusíads, 1573), considered to be one of the most important works in sixteenth-century Portuguese literature. Audiovisual involvement; electronic music by Jorge Peixinho (produced at the Institut voor Psychoakustika en Elektronische Muziek, IPEM, in Ghent, Belgium), slides by Ernesto de Sousa, instrumental improvisation by the Grupo de Música Contemporânea de Lisboa. The first presentation of this work was at the Mixed-Media Festival in Ghent, Belgium, in January 1975. It was subsequently presented in Portugal at the Galeria de Belém, with the support of the Directorate-General for Cultural Action, in February 1976, with the artistic collaboration of Fernando Calhau.
- 20 Ernesto de Sousa - Luiz Vaz, programa, Lisbon: Galeria de Belém, Direção Geral da Ação Cultural, February 1976.
- 21 The essay Oralidade, futuro da arte, originally published in 1968, is a rewriting, with new notes, of some of the themes dealt with in this essay from 1965. The essay was written for the catalogue of the exhibition of the graphic design work of Armando Alves at the Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto, from 9 to 24 January 1964. It was republished in José Ernesto de Sousa - Oralidade, futuro da arte e outros textos, 1953-1987. São Paulo: Escrituras, 2011.
- 22 On this subject and the history of Portuguese photography during this period, see Emília Tavares, op. cit and Emília Tavares - "Portuguese Photography 1970-2000" in History of European Photography, vol. 3. Bratislava, Central House of Photography, 2016.

- 23 Alia Al-Saji - "La vision dans le miroir: L'intercorporeité comme commencement d'une éthique dans l'oeil et l'esprit". In Chiasmi International 6 - Merleau Ponty - Entre Esthétique et Psychanalyse. University of Memphis: Mimesis Edizione, 2005, pp. 253-270.
- 24 Ibidem.
- 25 Sahin Gulcevahir - La Phenomenologie du Corps et de L'Intersubjectivité incarnée chez Gabriel Marcel et Merleau-Ponty. Consulted online at http://lettres.sorbonneuniversite.fr/IMG/pdf/GULCEVAHIR_SAHIN_Position.pdf
- 26 Ernesto de Sousa, Artes Gráficas, veículo de intimidade [catalogue of the exhibition of the graphic design work of Armando Alves]. Porto: Inova, 1965, p. 10.
- 27 Ibidem, p. 20.
- 28 This aspect is developed in José Miranda Justo, *op. cit.*
- 29 Ernesto de Sousa, Oralidade..., p. 30.
- 30 Ibidem.
- 31 Ernesto de Sousa, Artes Gráficas..., p. 26.
- 32 **????**
- 33 Ana Hatherly - "The Reinvention of Reading. In Visible Language - The Journal for Research on the Visual Media of Language Expression. Volume XI, No. 3, Summer 1977, pp. 307-320.
- 34 Ibidem, p. 312.
- 35 Ana Hatherly- O Espaço crítico - Do Simbolismo à Vanguarda. Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 1979, pp. 12-13.
- 36 Ibidem.
- 37 Ibidem.
- 38 José Arando da Silva, preface to Manuel Begonha - 5ª Divisão MFA - Revolução e Cultura. Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2nd edition, April 2016, p. 13.
- 39 The Central Mobilising Committee was suppressed on 26 November 1975, following the attempted military coup that brought an end to the PREC and instituted the *Processo Constitucional em Curso* (Constitutional Process in Progress), which would lead to the establishment of the parliamentary regime.
- 40 Manuel Begonha, *op. cit.* p. 14.
- 41 There is just one note to be found in the work of Ramiro Correia - Livro Branco da 5ª Divisão 1974-1975, Lisbon: Livraria Ler, 1984. On page 162, mention is made of Ernesto de Sousa's participation in a conference at the National Cultural Centre.
- 42 Mentioned in some of his notes.
- 43 Manuel Begonha, *op. cit.* p. 46.
- 44 Espólio Ernesto de Sousa. Cota D6, cx 60, maço 5354-5357-96, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon. It is kept together with another document and a bundle dated May, 1974.
- 45 Boaventura de Sousa Santos - Os Três Tempos Simbólicos da Relação entre as Forças Armadas e a Sociedade Portuguesa, 1985. Consulted online at: http://www.boaventuradesousasantos.pt/media/pdfs/Tres_tempos_simbolicos_RCCS15-16-17.PDF, p. 29.
- 46 Espólio Ernesto de Sousa, Cota D6, cx 68, maço 1.12(4). Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon.
- 47 Espólio Ernesto de Sousa, Cota D6, cx 11, maço 8125-8130-18^A, kept together with another document dated November, 1974. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon.
- 48 Ramiro Correia - Livro Branco da 5ª Divisão, Doc. 049 - 21 February, 1975 - Programa de Dinamização Cultural - Comissão Organizadora Central - Análise Global da Evolução da Campanha, pp. 106-109.
- 49 Sónia Vespeira de Almeida - "Vítimas do fascismo" - Os camponeses e a dinamização cultural do Movimento das Forças Armadas (1974-1975). Análise Social, vol. XLIII (4^o), 2008, p. 825.
- 50 Sónia Vespeira de Almeida - *op. cit.* p. 825. (She does not identify the author of this statement).
- 51 Ernesto de Sousa - Revolution My Body. Lisbon: FCG, June 1998, p. 87.

THE MURAL OF JUNE 10th OR THE PASSAGE A L'ACTE ERNESTO DE SOUSA

[...] A witness report (by the young artist António Mendes): "It happened on May 1st, on the streets, when a group of painters, in the wake of recent experiences in Cuba, came up with the idea to paint the walls of the [Instituto Superior] Técnico. The walls were ugly and they wanted to turn them beautiful; because it was about time to manifest and do what they had learned to do, in front of everyone. And thus the painters would paint, and those musicians, actors and others who wanted to join them did so." And he concludes: it was about organizing "a feast of joy".

... in this moment the term and notion of **feast** is mentioned for the first time. Here the machinery of the *passage à l'acte* starts to reveal itself. Not even the blockage of the initial idea could have avoided it - neither formalism nor deep contradictions... nor the entropy of assumption theories. The Peoples Feast beat the "Puppets to the people" idea. It would prove explosive and cathartic like all real feasts... Let's not anticipate too much but instead follow António Mendes' narrative.

"Then came the moment of organization... and before we realized (at least before I had realized) the feast was already under way. I had joined a real amusement, a feast, and I found myself in the midst of an extremely composed 'tribute'...

... which didn't take place under the open sky but inside...

... which was not about covering a blank wall, but painting a conventional canvas...

... which was not a spontaneous demonstration but instead an official celebration that had been announced through all information channels."

I allowed myself to highlight these three elements of the young painter's speech because they contain already an essential part of the criticism concerning the action as well as the final "work". Closed space, conventional support, celebration and high esteem, guaranteed publicity. Even under these circumstances, António Mendes mentions the restrictive character: "Starting a manifestation of happiness by offending others is absurd." I'd like to highlight in passing the pertinent spirit of this observation, which certain discussions, articles and reports will finally confirm.

"And thus, when I went, it was without much excitement..."

And in the meantime:

"The feast happened and I think it went better than expected... there was an unexpected vibe of celebration, however brutally interrupted - for sure - by the television censorship that we all are aware of."

Magnificent achievement! The "work" was done, which for now, and independently from any qualms was an obvious success. The "work" has certain limits and qualities: a conventional canvas without a space of its own, that does not even belong to any architecture, and therefore is practically absurd aside from its ephemeral and celebratory character; add to that contrasting opinions and you have a metaphor for a group that is unable to work collectively. But the mechanisms of the *passage à l'acte* took place as a celebration. In Celebration.

No real contradiction is apparent. Instead it should be added that the party consisted of different elements whose effect on the final result are difficult to determine. In a coffin on the Tagus river, the burial of fascism; the "heroic" songs of Lopes Graça; a space destined to be painted-by-all-people, the "going blind" of the Commune... and so many other manifestations, as well as the sweat of the artists, the beautiful spectacle of their comings and goings, the immense scaffolding with visits from ministers and other personalities, the fondling of an incipient democracy that represents innocence; all that next to the general infrastructure, the TV cameras and their broadcasts on different screens. The most important of all this was perhaps the beautiful theatre of the Commune and the report on television - as reality would afterwards confirm. I'd like to say something else on the theatre and on the theatre of the Commune in particular: these are people that did not wait for any April to happen, no one was hiding behind the pretext of paternal tyranny to assert himself as non-conformist. This already happened, at least, since Gil Vicente.

I will continue with the words of António Mendes, extending his and my vows.

"I hope, however, that this was not only a party during which a more or less accomplished painting was produced, but also a way of opening things up, so that artists go out on the street, do things and mix with life.

And by that I do not mean **art for the people...** Art for the people, no, artists for the people, yes."

Art for the people, **puppets to the people**. "Stop playing with conceptual art, make puppets for the people." Thus two ideas are summarized that, despite the good faith with which they have been enunciated, have to be classified as retrograde and doubtful.

It's just that for these kind of things having faith or even the best intentions is not enough.

Not only faith at least, not the best intentions at most. As responsibility increases, and the more responsive a situation is, more care and research is required

by those who intervene publicly with *slogans*, articles, speeches or drawings... We are no longer in 1945, at the midst of the century, a period of naivety and purism that was still romantic, full of propaganda and with an art thought to be unfurling in the winds of history; things are now more real than they are – **actual and true** as Brecht would say. A flag is a flag, an impressive Cuban poster is an impressive Cuban poster, and the artistic research and study (truly of our time and really avant-garde) are what they are: research and study – just as necessary and indispensable as research in the human and natural sciences.

Two concepts need to be arranged for, out of reach for kids and novices. Way up on the shelves where poison and other drugs are stored.

First, puppets to the people. It is a paternalistic, petty bourgeois concept, which is not even worth speaking about.

The second is more serious. To think that the avant-garde art (to call it **conceptual** altogether is pure ignorance) is useless and alien to “the people”, is to mystify the common meaning of this set of directions and questions which Mário Pedrosa termed **post-modernism**; a common sense that precisely fights the “objective” character of pseudo-modern art destined for external contemplation, the affirmation of the artist as privileged and elitist and the widening of the gap between exhibition and spectator. I mean a common sense that calls for the participation and character of an artistic action (rather than an aesthetic object) **produced by all**. Thus strictly conceptual research represents an exception and is similar to linguistic research, a bit like semiotics gone wild – but let’s not go into more detail.

Portuguese painters in general are **modern** and not post-modern, and “proudly alone” they turn their backs to a real topical research and are still hooked on 18th century concepts of artisanal perfection, hand crafted painting, and at any rate go with the flow of the market. There are only few and often courageous exceptions. With regards to the “mural” in Belém (which isn’t even a mural) there isn’t anything courageous in its theoretical principles, although the *passage à l’acte* has been a brave and very pleasant achievement. The fact of consciously appearing however was not to bring the “audience” – as has been mentioned – closer to the creative act. On the contrary. If the artists gave everything during the show, this was nice, however it did not diminish the distance between the audience and the stage. They produced Puppets for the people and in front of the public. This came to be so, even for those operators in whose work a research principle emerged, because of the open and skillful character of the group that has influenced them.

Does this mean that the mural did not spark any interest? Not at all. In addition to a small but not insignificant interest, which results from the addition of several more or less valid elements (and it would be interesting to analyze them), the truth is that the project in its entirety exceeds the sum of its parts, and that beyond initial assumptions the “mural” reveals an unexpected festive character. To someone who thinks arithmetically this may seem paradoxical. [...] The mechanism of the *passage à l’acte* can inspire beyond the stereotype. In other words, since neither hypothesis nor basic features are truly modern, the project appears to point towards a postmodern aperture. If this is the case, it would be interesting if the painters started to study and discuss the meaning of such a *passage à l’acte* without vanity and group dissent.

“O mural de 10 de Junho ou a passagem ao acto” was first published in *Colóquio-Artes* #19, October 1974

Translation: Tobi Maier

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AESTHETIC OPERATION ERNESTO DE SOUSA

When describing a great work of art we must gain some distance from current definitions, which separate art from life, frame it or place it on a pedestal. And it is necessary to rediscover the aesthetic character of certain events which were not conceived as works of art. Only the totally blind have not yet understood that artistic mediation is essential when planning certain events while this country undergoes a historical crisis; that discussions are weak and confused if reduced to spoken and written words.

Since April 25th and May 1st until the present, there have been many everyday and apparently banal events that deserve artistic attention. The recent June 17 demonstration (by the revolutionary councils of the workers, soldiers and sailors) can be understood as a true *aesthetic operation* with vanguard and non-opportunistic (but timely) ideas. And it was also a beautiful event...

In fact, it is worth remembering that the most important principle of the artistic avant-garde was to break down barriers between art and life. It is the moment to fight and defeat our consumer society, our society of the spectacle. It is the moment to finally understand that “every spectator is either a coward or a traitor”...

Let’s return to the demonstration. More than 50 000 people took to the streets, proclaiming – according to the slogans – a “Revolutionary information at the service of the working class!” and demanding a “Revolutionary Government now!” But the most important can’t be told through numbers, only by who participated. In this mass of people the pockets of blue-collar workers dressed in uniform stood out, marked by the traces of the industrial everyday (from Lisnave alone several thousand workers attended). In summary: these were really the workers and it was perhaps only the second occasion at which the chatty Lisbon bourgeoisie would see and feel them – as something unstoppable facing tragedies or sagas...

... Just as any procession during the Middle Ages, with its flags and horse blankets (which also was not formed to be a art work in itself), or an Olympic parade (idem, idem). The profound sensation of dignity, similar to a religious or highly civic emotion; the accuracy, the composition, the ornaments, in the form of couplets, national or simply straightforward red flags; the impressive music of shouted words and, finally, the color, these are the elements of this truly modern art work: process art, “when attitudes become form”, participatory art, art and life.

We can also mention the sculptural attraction, although this might not be the most important. Colors, supreme configurations and large clusters. A heterogeneous formation wearing civilian, military and sailors outfits, add to that the hardhat wearing workforce, all together, forming a remarkable avant-garde. Then came the large white cluster of restaurant workers from Lisnave; then successive formations of blue-collar workers, large groups separated by the color of their white, brown, yellow, blue and green helmets. Between these crowds, other soldiers and sailors; and at the end a huge tail of civilians. The flags were all red and some featured yellow stars, the couplets with drawings and slogans completed this sculptural joy.

This ‘descent’ by the workers into the city means more than the pure aesthetic phenomena highlighted here. Whatever the process (“two steps forward, one step back”) in which an event of this importance is inserted, it is certainly a lasting process. Anything that seems to change everything, in particular, should shift the attention of fellow artists, writers, filmmakers, photographers and artistic workers in general.

It is time to pose a question: for how much longer will they remain undecided and only take care of the craft objects, their gardens and their more or less academic backyards?

“A mais bela operação estética” was first published in *Vida Mundial* #1867, June 26 1975

Translation: Tobi Maier



Ernesto de Sousa
 (contact sheet, gelatin silver print)



Ernesto de Sousa, "Intimate Piece", 1976
 (contact sheet, gelatin silver print)

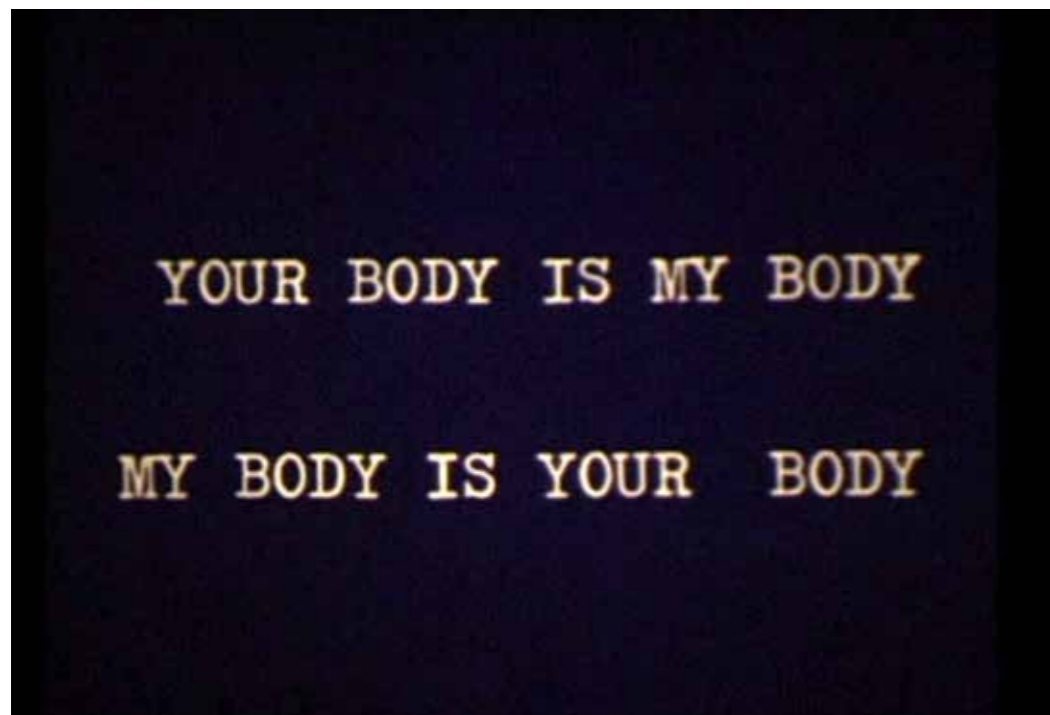


Ernesto de Sousa
 (contact sheet, gelatin silver print)



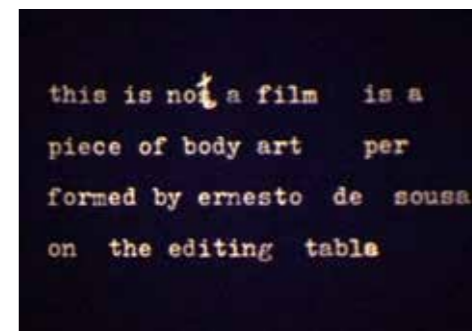
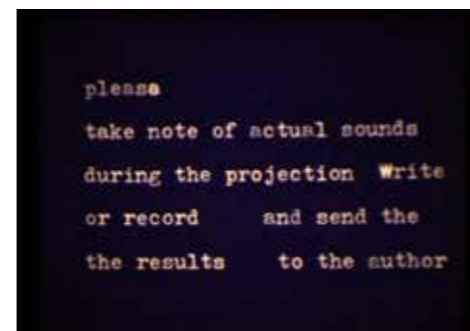
"Revolução, Corpo, Tempo" (Revolution, Body, Time), 1978
 3 strips of plasticized photographic prints (8 elements, 18x18 cm)
 and plasticized type written text (18x18 cm) mounted on wood.
 MNAC collection

REVOLUTION MY BODY #2 ERNESTO DE SOUSA



Revolution My Body Nr. 2 (1976) is a film (Super 8, color, silent) and a performance. Projected on white paper sheets (screens) (102 x 65 cm), each one with a printed inscription inviting the audience to act upon the screen during the projection. Variable duration. Initially titled This is My Body nr. 1.

Revolution My Body Nr. 2, Ernesto de Sousa explains in Colóquio/Artes, # 30 1976, is "a series of screen prints and a film. The screen prints are completely white paper sheets with a visually insignificant print of the sentences: YOUR BODY IS MY BODY / MY BODY IS YOUR BODY in a circular symmetrical disposition. The same sentence is repeated in a film, separating the respective shots without any edition. The film This is My Body nr. 1 represents a workers' protest. (...) Finally a signboard invites the participants to truly being it by manifesting their bodies on the white paper sheets."





STATEMENT THAT ACCOMPANIES THE WORK, REQUESTING THE PUBLIC'S COLLABORATION:

Leave your body on this sheet of paper
a sign or a part of your body:
the part the sign are worth the whole

a mark with your fingernail
or a piece of this or any other part of your body

homage to Joseph Beuys Acconci

a fingerprint or another mark of your body any part

homage to Artaud Lautréamont

a drawing a signature
a portrait a line: your hand to your body

homage to Saussure Derrida

an idea a memory:
a graphic detail a hieroglyphic of that memory your calm your soul

homage to Freud Lacan Lévi-Strauss

an object any related with your social involvement
a shadow Chinese homage to Marx Courbet Vostell Buñuel
your body anywhere of

homage to Godard Straub Warhol

a little of your blood
sperm or any liquid
from your body

homage to Isabel
homage to all the women who are not
called Isabel homage to all men
whose destiny wants to be woman
(Isabel is called Olympia)

Do what you do with love remember that
your body is my body that my body is
your body that your body is to my body that
my body is your body that your body
is my body that my body is your body
that your body is my body that
my body is to your body that is your body

Translation: John Elliot



revolution my body number three

an integration process

an actual network communication

a tautology of private memory

your body is my body

my body is your body

this piece consists of a series of twelve
photographic contact proofs giving an
average time for each exposure of five
seconds

and another series whose time is by
this arbitrary measure fixed in a total
of 60 seconds

sixty seconds from a fixed memory
of a revolutionary day

whatever is real in a day remains an actual
duration piece

Ernesto de Sousa's project for SACOM 1 comprised an exhibition of works and documentation of other projects, but also the projection of the film Revolution My Body #2, presented at Malpartida Creative Center, Vostell Museum, Malpartida de Cáceres in January 1978, with interventions by the public.

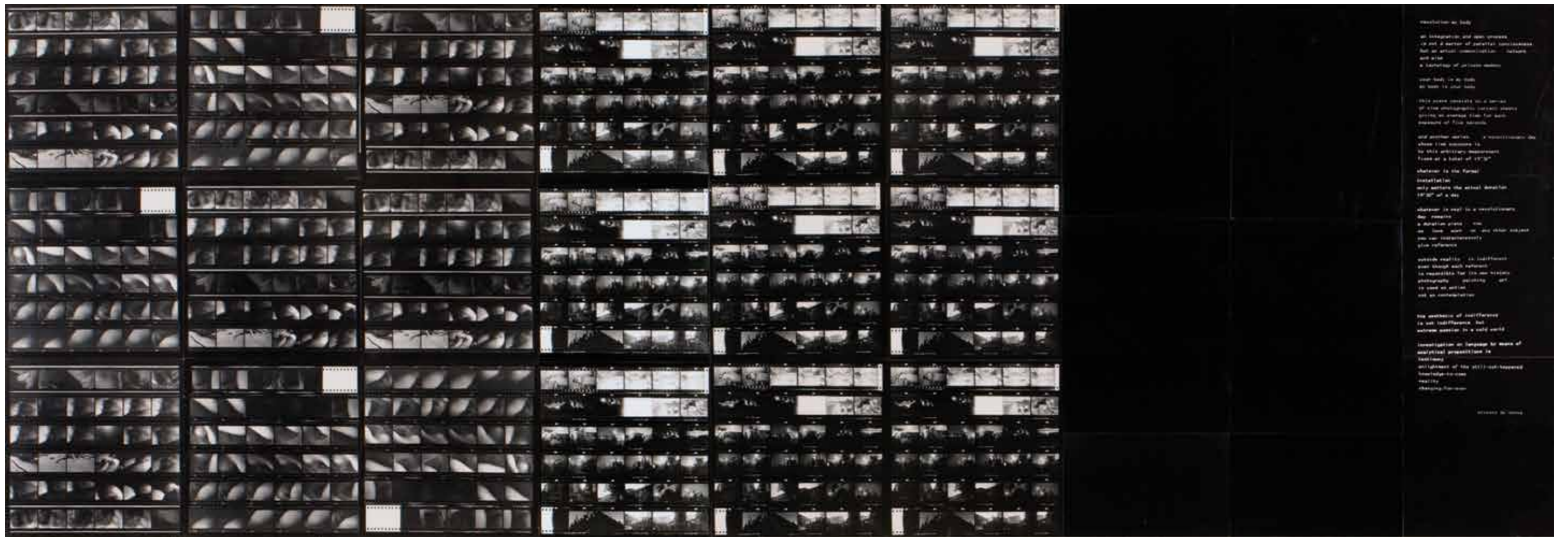
any reality other
than the actual piece is indifferent
even
though each referent is responsible
for its own history

investigation of language by means
of analytical propositions is also
suspended desire looking at
the body of absolutely other
revolution

so
photography painting art
is used as action
not as contemplation

Ernesto de Sousa





REVOLUTION MY BODY #1 ERNESTO DE SOUSA

Revolution My Body #1, 1978
Photographic contact sheets and text.
27 silver gelatin prints, 72 x 214 cm
Berardo collection

revolution my body

an integration and open process
is not a matter of parallel consciousness
but an actual communication network
and also
a tautology of private memory

your body is my body
my body is your body

this piece consists of a series
of nine photographic contact sheets
giving an average time for each
exposure of five seconds
and another series a revolutionary day
whose time exposure is
by this arbitrary measurement
fixed at a total of 19'30"

whatever is the formal
installation
only matters the actual duration
19'30" of a day
whatever is real in a revolutionary
day remains
a duration piece now
so love work or any other subject

you can instantaneously
give reference

outside reality is indifferent
even though each referent
is responsible for its own history
photography painting art
is used as action
not as contemplation

the aesthetic of indifference
is not indifference but
extreme passion in a cold world

investigation of language by means of
analytical propositions is
testimony
enlightenment of the still-not-happened
knowledge-to-come
reality
changing-for-ever

ernesto de souza

THIS IS MY BODY #3&4, PROPER NAMES AND IMPROPER NAMES, TRADITION AS ADVENTURE ERNESTO DE SOUSA



The exhibition A Tradição como Aventura (Tradition as Adventure), Galeria Quadrum 1978, was composed of the reproduction of a hellenic profile (9 gelatin silver prints, 127,5x80 cm, altered texts by Laing and Saint Augustine (2 gelatin prints 127,5x80 cm) and one or two "Mandalas" (variable technique and dimension). It also consisted of an installation of three panels with pages from the foldout books (books-in-progress) This is My Body #3, This is My Body #4 and Nomes Próprios e Impróprios (Proper names and improper names). The exhibition aimed to promote a discussion about the social space and the sacred space and included a get-together area, with documentation of other of Ernesto de Sousa's activities, as well as a panel for audience interventions.



This Is My Body #3. Book in progress / portable piece, 1977. 16 strips with 8 gelatin silver prints each, 130x352 cm

This Is My Body #4. Book in progress / portable piece, 1978. 17 strips with 8 gelatin silver prints each, 130x374 cm

Nomes Próprios e Impróprios. Book in progress / portable piece, 1978. 16 strips with 8 gelatin silver prints each, 130x352 cm

Je suis un autre (Rimbaud) Moi, pour moi, c'est trop peu (Mayakovsky) Sa découverte, c'est que l'homme n'est pas tout à fait dans l'homme (Freud-Lacan) Le regard n'est plus seulement infini: objet partiel, il s'est transformé en objet perdu (S. Sarduy) A moi. L'histoire d'une de mes folies (Rimbaud)

The non-work (death) is the definition of life. A commemorative monument, to what I stand for and what I lack. Unforeseeable and incurable yet implicit le manque. Between what I am (plenitude, contentment, joy – and the opposite) and the object of my desire (erotism, mother's breast, plenitude at last, object (a) utopia, revolution) something is interposed.

On the one hand everything is for you, that is the principle of pleasure; on the other there is the compulsion for the repetitive; recommencement, work, metonymy... the death instinct.

I use a life (my own) as a testimony. Readymade.

... I love you and desire you and every desire demands eternity. As Zarathustra says: profound eternity. But I know what – you are, what I am, evanescent and ready for liquid-action. All that remains for us is the clearness of our edges. To be discovered. By the implacable analysis of differences, the invention of the word in the assassination of the strictest language. I repeat, I love you wildly.

To summarize:

The story of my father (so gentle but somewhat far away). My mother's breasts: "when I see pink I think they mean me".

The story of law. Resistance. Not to do so would be more than I could stand. C'était le temps des assassins.

Cinema. The discovery of the other. *Don Roberto* and *Imagem*. Culture, France ("la Grande Chaumière", the Studios). Radio plays (that was when I met Redol, a good man).

The other theatre (that was when I met José Rodrigues, Peixinho, Rosa). And Raul Brandão and Oporto!

My friend Tunhas was dying: "Je veux vivre mais pas aujourd'hui". Algés and the Primeiro Acto: Fluxus and beyond the theatre. I had met Almada Negreiros, I began.

Italy, Russia, Europe, the World.

Music, the "Grupo de Musica Contemporanea": I was part of the band.

Art Criticism (that was when I met Lopes Graça) Seara Nova, neo-realism and then the 25th of April. Criticism an option or a necessity? In Portugal it's a necessity (Garrett).

The passion for sculpture. Folk Art. *Moi! qui me suis dit mage ou ange dispensé de toute morale, je suis rendu, au sol, avec un devoir à chercher, et la réalité rugueuse à étreindre! Paysan!*

The passion for painting, that was when I began to manufacture paint. I was finishing a university course in science. The great revolt. Which later turned into a dark-room.

And finally, I saw the Bird of Paradise.

What Alternative?

I began to experiment with the appropriation of literary-typographical texts in 1977 (*Alternativa Zero*). Exhibition of ORLANDO (Virginia Woolf). Absolute dis-authorisation (anonymised) and the tautological character (translation, typo-graphy). The coincidence of meaning was played out as aesthetic research. Coincidence with the exhibition itself: time, total evanescence and a hecatomb of words. Zero.

This installation here is above all a *quadrum* (frame plinth, gallery, museum) of two texts. Laing and St. Augustine. Without translation, the texts should be *peeped at*.

The text of the *Confessions* was manipulated: changement de genre (key e-vident?): masculine/feminine, God/revolution.

Ex-text, ex-position. The sense of peeping – not as at a peep-show or cliché. Hidden sense: something is missing in the exhibition about what-is-missing. *Ce n'est pas encore ça*. Mother's breast, mandalas. Names, mantras. And there is an exhibition inside the exhibition. But, *ce n'est pas encore ça*. As all of life, the aesthetic process, the ex-position is a work of death. Everything happens, ex. But – how to say it? – like a sunlit side, beginning, still sun, something unforeseeably different absolutely other which is nevertheless on view, right on the surface mine, yours.

There is also something missing from this paper, the curriculum and the details. Not because we are against identification. But because we think this kind of thing, here, would smack of pleonasm. In particular because...

... when they ask me what my profession is, what *kind* of art I do (“if you want to be the first take care not to be the last”), I always think of Machiavelli, Sade, Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Nietzsche, Artaud... some other authors and I only feel like answering with the greatest cynicism and sincerity:

... I 'd like to be a saint. No other profession suits me. And I wouldn't worry about dying for it. But the cross, martyrdom, Calvary itself, the cause and the movement should have a sense. And that has to be known... knowing demands un-knowing, the work a non-work. This exhibition is an exhibition. As if it were possible to say: It would have been better never to have been born! L'imprévisible miroir.

a tradição como aventura	dieu est ma créature
changement de genre de dieu	la révolution c'est la femme
dilaceração	aujourd'hui c'est une blessure entre deux bords marqués par la rigueur
doubtless	you are the voice of the people and when you die wisdom will die with you!
la non-oeuvre est à naître	(a)
la joie c'est la seule façon de connaître cette fletrissure l'être qui me manque	
blessure	hoje é uma ferida rasgada entre duas margens marcadas de rigor
I have seen the Bird of Paradise, she has spread herself before me, and I shall never be the same again	a revolução no passado isto aconteceu e a revolução num futuro imprevisível absolutamente outro
être un saint	
c'est l'état de mon corps qui fera le Jugement Dernier	
o mais íntimo e por vezes o mais externo	
cassure censura le manque carência fault béance ruptura elision	
blessure fissure repressão lapso ausência mutilation exclusão a falta want of	
être à définir	et c'est ainsi qu'à force de mourrir j'ai fini par gagner une immortalité réelle
contra o poder tanatocrático	paradise now olhar de sosiaio

Text by Ernesto de Sousa for the exhibition "A Tradição como Aventura", Galeria Quadrum, 1978.

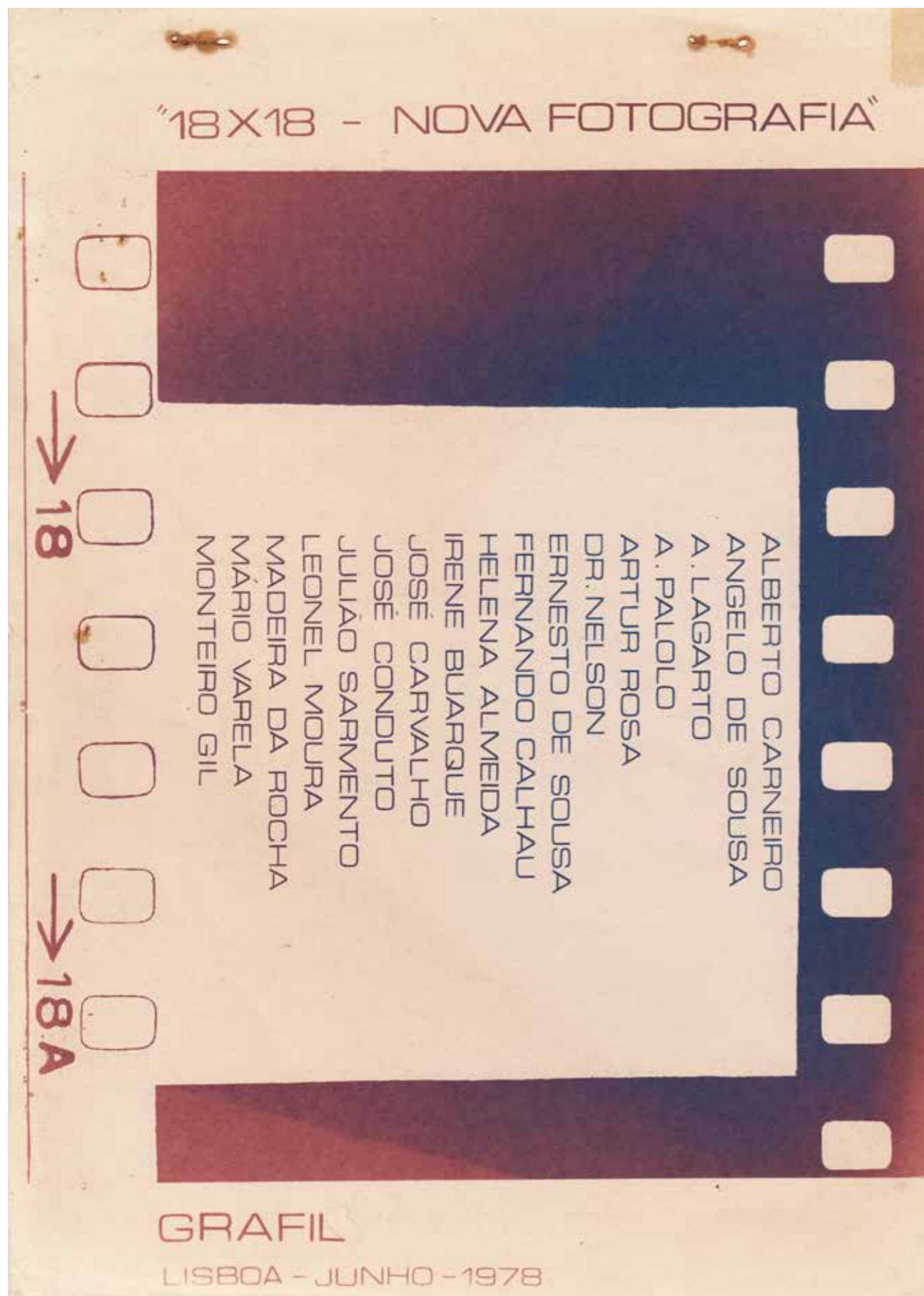
Translation: David Evans



"Identificación Con Tu Cuerpo", installation conceived by Ernesto de Sousa for the Lavadero of the Vostell Museum in Malpartida (during SACOM 2, 2nd Week of Contemporary Art Malpartida), 1979. It consisted of portraits of the inhabitants of Malpartida (aprox. 600 gelatin silver prints, 6x6 cm, 1977-78) suspended on strings stretched between the pillars of the building. The members of the audience were invited to exchange an object of their own for a photograph.

"Malpartida, and that was its success", says Ernesto de Sousa in an interview by Michel Giroud in Canal (# 29-31 1979), "allowed us [artists from Lisbon] to work with artists from Coimbra and Oporto, for the first time since Alternativa. For a week, we lived a new spirit. (...) we really got to know each other by working together in a friendly environment. I am a creator and an animator at the same time (...). (...) With Alternativa and Malpartida we had a practical demonstration of the possibilities of getting the young and the old together. Without discussing aesthetic tendencies, the different paths. In that it is similar to the Fluxus concept. There is an operational quality in common, not an aesthetics."

Top: António Barros and Isabel Alves help installing Identificación Con Tu Cuerpo.
Center: View of the installation at the Lavadero. In the back, a work by António Barros.
Bottom: Participation of the public (António Barros).



THE "NEW" PHOTOGRAPHY

ERNESTO DE SOUSA

There are not yet any absolutely correct epithets for describing what is new. The new is a zero point in terms of surprise; its appearance precedes our knowledge of it, coming prior to our engagement with it. Anybody (providing that they have the necessary instruments and the respective "instructions") can engage in criticism of what is new; in practice, the specialists could also do so, if their specialisation had not already perhaps clouded their innocence... (specialisation is a transitory evil, indeed a necessary evil in a divided city; it is extremely bad when the specialists begin to take the part as the whole... which almost always happens).

Let us return to the new, and to our criticism of it: we say, for example, new photography, just as we say a new book or an artist's book, a new film or an artist's film. For technically new media, there is less ambiguity and we fall into the trap of uttering such redundancies as "video art" or "body art". That such terms are redundant can be seen even better in this latter designation, since, evidently, all artistic activity is body art. Yet it is true that, in this domain - the new (the truly new) - we frequently have to resort to redundancies, pleonasm, and even to a certain loquacious contradiction to designate the new objects of our passionate knowledge... which are never just simply new media. Photography, for example, has existed technically just as we know it today for some three quarters of a century - and now we are talking about new photography.

And not without reason.

A COMPLEX HISTORY

Photography does, in fact, have a complex history. As in the case of cinema, we could say that this complexity began before its actual invention: in other words, it already existed before it was invented. This is, truthfully speaking, a technical aspect that we will not go into here. The most important thing is what happened in the case of the first daguerreotypes (from Daguerre); the works of Niépce and others; the already 'classical' work of Nadar. Thereafter, photography was to be like a second daughter, a more or less compromised replacement for painting. Even when (in the works of Paul Strand, for example) his *réussites* rivalled their 'elder sister' in terms of their formal originality. This does not mean that there weren't any more or less isolated operators exploring new paths with the new medium. Right at the very beginning of this history, there were the cases of Marey, and above all Eadweard Muybridge. What amazing intuition! But these authors were like the engineer

Eiffel: they made a work of art, believing that they were just building a functional bridge or tower. They were followed later on by such fully conscious, but relatively isolated, people as Man Ray, the Dadaist, and the friend of Duchamp; or Moholy-Nagy, the teacher from the famous Bauhaus school. Marcel Duchamp himself, in this aspect just as in many others, intuitively understood what the "new" photography would be like. In 1942, he replaced a detail imitating a photograph, in a painting by Delvaux, with an actual photograph... but this already has to do with memory, desire and a new way of looking at things...

MEMORY AND DESIRE

For a long time, thinkers have turned their attention to the gaze, which, as Marx was to say, seeking his inspiration in the work of Hegel, is a directly theoretical feeling. "Every attentive glance is already a theory about the world," as Goethe had said before. In fact, the way we look arouses our desire and causes it to stop at the limit of consumption. In this sense, the gaze is a transgression of the other, always and without any defence; but it is a transgression that constantly performs the first great erotic operation *de facto*: restraint. I see you, your beautiful legs or the slight parting of your lips, and I suspend my desire, you are the unknown woman sitting in front of me on the train, or even my everyday companion. In this case, too, I still glance at you sideways, snatching non-operative looks, or the desire no longer exists between us... I am giving simple examples, but desire is not always content with simplicity. Let us look at this closely: this restraint is already a memory and 'new' photography. Let me put it in a simpler and more banal fashion: it is a record. Or, following an opposite line of reasoning, what has been revolutionised by (genuinely new) photography is the recording and the perpetuity of the gaze; and this has countered the loss of memory, or death, if you want this to be mixed with all forms of restraint. I can conserve (possess) this moment of desire, which was formerly fleeting, or more fleeting. Of course, this has to do with an absolute (immortal) time that is enacted at the most mortal everyday instant, without any history.

The record. In the Stone Age, when man desired to capture the fleeting prey, he drew it, recorded it... in a certain way, he photographed it, in this new sense: creating a relationship between death and desire. Later, the first farmers abandoned the photographic hyper-realism of the first paintings or engravings; and they

moved on to writing, another way of recording memory, a second phase of desire. Balzac said, “to speak of love is to make love”. Looking and speaking are really the two paths of desire, which can only be understood in a creative/destructive (dialectic) opposition.

ANTI-PAINTING

Everything is relative. Anti-painting, like anti-cinema, is the expression of a relationship, as we have already said. They are more dynamic and stimulating in certain contexts, and, in this sense, they are necessary. We have to talk about other ruptures of the anti-school and anti-criticism, for example. But let us return to the new photography.

It is a vast field. Fundamentally, it has little to do with formal appearance, with pictorial beauty, the perceptive world. It is a form of anti-painting. But, even in this case, things are not simple and there are new investigations being undertaken in the field of perception that are quite rightly photographic, or part of the new photography. With a more general approach, the new photography has to do with memory, the (non-)death of memory and the suspension of desire. In this sense, it also distances itself from cinema and video, which imitate or speculate (from *speculum*, meaning mirror) the gaze. Photography does not imitate the gaze, it suspends it. And, like the gaze, it suspends and conserves desire (communicating it at another level). What the French call *voyeurs* are, after all, normal men (or women) who distinguish themselves, marginalise themselves, through the isolation of certain phases or processes of contact with the Other. The new photography suspends drawing in a process that comes close to that of the *voyeur* that we all are. It was practised long ago for the facts that lie outside our history, in journalistic reporting, analysis and the respective sequences. And now it is (more) aesthetically discovered at the level of memory. Especially at the level of the future memory, and already without any fear: entering into your lips, after all. Looking at you, at you who are absolutely another.

“A ‘nova’ fotografia” was first published in 18x18 – Nova Fotografia, Grafil, Lisbon, 1978.

Translation: John Elliot

THE PROMISED LAND

ERNESTO DE SOUSA



Video-sculpture for four to eight monitors, four U-Matic 625 lines video cassettes (black & white, silent) and performance with the simultaneous reading of texts from the Bible, by Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault, 20', 1979-1980.

Images captured in Vilarinho das Furnas, October 1979.

Direction and photography by Ernesto de Sousa.

Filming by Fernando Curado Matos.

Assistance by Luísa Matos and Isabel Alves.

Editing by Vítor Leitão.

Produced by Secretaria de Estado da Cultura with support from Parque da Peneda-Gerês.

Technical support of Instituto de Tecnologia Educativa.





THE PROMISED LAND - REQUIEM FOR VILARINHO DAS FURNAS
Video action in Vilarinho das Furnas: 5 October 1979



Video-sculpture: 4/8 monitors to 4 cassettes UMATIC system 625 line CCIR b/w; idem, Scotch cassettes. Performance with 4 voices. DIRECTION OF ERNESTO DE SOUSA. Collaboration of Fernando Curado Matos, Luisa Matos, Isabel Alves and Vítor Leitão. Produced by "Galeria Nacional de Arte Moderna de Belém" (Cultural State Dept.) with the support of Park Peneda Gerês. Technical support of "Instituto de Tecnologia Educativa". Duration: 20 minutes. S.N.B.A. (Fine Arts Association) included in the collective expo. "Arte Portuguesa Hoje". Performance on January 17th, 19,00 hrs. Voices: Ana Hatherly, Ernesto de Sousa, Julião Sarmento and Teresa O'Neill. Documental photos of the performance Alberto Picco and Monteiro Gil.

I DEDICATE

this video involvement and this action

to Fernando Pessoa Almada Negreiros
my country my language
my joy my life

to Jorge Dias Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira António Campos
discovery a probable humanity

to Jorge Luis Borges José Guimarães Rosa
eternity, yes but not as slowly
sua calma sua alma

to Robert Morris Carl Andre Richard Long
Anne and Patrick Poirier Charles Simonds
body rock weight the ruin and its ghost

to Alberto Carneiro Cláudio Costa
bread archaeology "in regress"

to Marcel Mauss Lévi-Strauss Michel Foucault
the meaningless or wild speeches

to Júlia Kristeva the foreigner
carnival and apocalypse

to Raul Brandão to the megalitic sculptors
of the Alentejo menhirs and

to all those who hope
the stone to bloom

in the Promised Land

Ernesto de Sousa



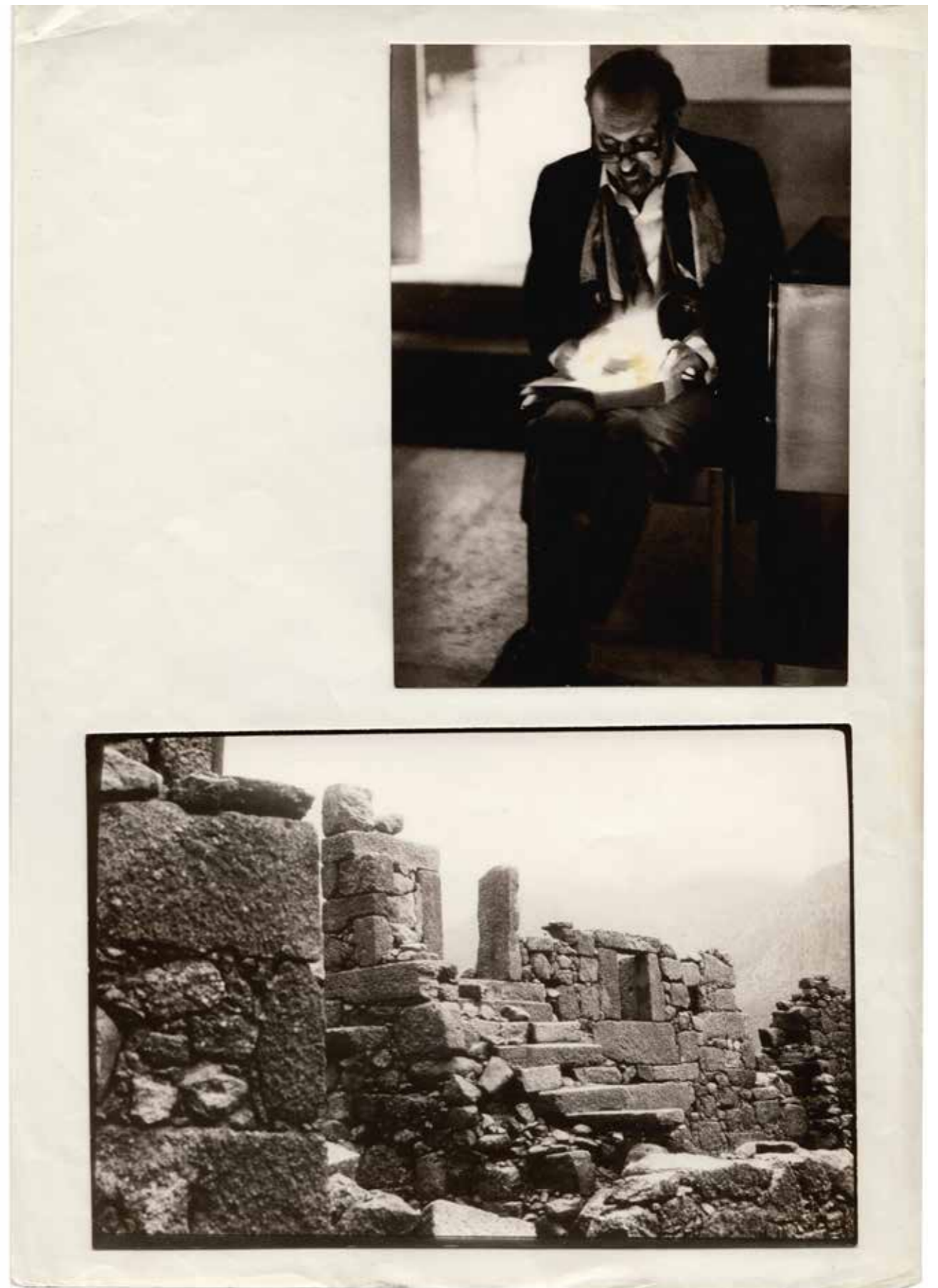
The Promised Land

by

Ernesto de Sousa

performance:
video-sculpture
with simultaneous
readings.

20 m.





Vilarinho das Furnas: The memory of the slide Faria Artur

“One cannot be modern without discovering the origins.” These are words by the writer and art critic Ernesto de Sousa, who, one of these evenings, in Lisbon, presented a series of slides that he recently produced in Vilarinho das Furnas, taking advantage of the opportunity that the village had once again surfaced from water.

Vilarinho das Furnas – nestled in the granite on the foothills at the *Amarela* mountain range, in the valley of the river *Homem* – was an *alfeira* community.*

In 1971, its land and houses began to be submerged by the water retained by the dam under construction, putting an end to a lively community with a culture of its own.

With the recent evacuation of the reservoir (for technical repairs), the remnants of this almost-Atlantis in the northeastern part of the Minho region emerged again. Ernesto de Sousa and his crew, which included the filmmaker Fernando de Matos, seized the opportunity soon after and went to photograph and film in the mountains.

Fernando de Matos had already been there and produced a film together with the children of emigrants from Frankfurt who wanted to return to their origins and collect details about a way of life.

Around 200 people had lived in almost 80 houses in Vilarinho. Together they worked as shepherds, raised pig, sheep and cattle and practiced a rudimentary polyculture. Of course, such poor forms of life – regardless of the progressive social organization – emanating from a subsistence economy and combined with the maladaptation of many who returned from the colonial wars, contributed to regional migration and emigration (especially towards France, Canada and Germany), in search of improved living standards. Thus it is possible to detect in the midst of an architecture inscribed in the so-called “granite civilization” the appearance of improved dwellings, constructed either with a mixture of cement and granite or protected by whitewashing. It does not come as a surprise that after a few years, the sons of emigrants, integrated in societies with comparatively innovative characteristics, were curious to study and learn more about the village where they came from. Taking advantage of the interest triggered during this first period, Fernando de Matos – with the support from the State Secretary for

Culture – is planning a film program on the “rural and ethnographic topic” in Frankfurt.

As Ernesto de Sousa pointed out, this significant interest in Vilarinho is nothing new. Take for example the book by Jorge Dias *Vilarinho das Furnas, Uma Aldeia Comunitária* (1948) [Vilarinho das Furnas, a community village], and the recent film *Vilarinho das Furnas* (1969) by the director António Campos, who has been classified as a “Sacred Monster” by Jean Rouch and whose work, although it is literally unknown here, has been exhibited abroad, more precisely in Nice (during the Portuguese film week) and, together with *Rio de Onor*, at the Cannes Festival in 1976 (as part of the series dedicated to the Cinema of Resistance). For the production of this work Campos remained alone in the village from May 1969 through June 1970 and recorded the entire process that led to the end of this community’s life.

Also connected to this topic is a weekly TV program produced by Ricardo Costa for RTP-2. The first episode has already been broadcast and addressed the life of the population in Castro Laboreiro with special attention to emigration issues as well as the migration within the mountain region.

The slides presented [by Ernesto de Sousa] contain, in fact, important reflections about what would have been the functioning of a community village and its agricultural organization, which Jorge Dias defined as “a local group composed of people who shared a well defined territory, which were connected by intimate relationships and personal conviviality, and which shared a common cultural heritage”.

A journey through these stones can lead us to fictionally recreate the obligatory (under penalty of a fine) weekly Thursday meetings, which took place at Chão do Forno and opened after a blow in a goat horn.

All these rituals resulted from community organization and were directed by a *Junta* (“the six”), headed by a chief known as *zelador* [caretaker], who acted as administrator and executor of the council’s decisions. An electoral body composed of male heads from all families chose these representatives.

Considering the architecture of the village, we are reminded of a megalithic civilization. The houses, attached to

each other and built with stones from the region (which also covered the streets), now appear in decay and the remnants of staircases ascend to infinity, evoking modern art expressions. Here and there debris of polished red roof tiles remains. On the top, left to crumble, stone by stone. Decrepit and bare trees maintain a proud posture and lurk in the cemetery without any dead, they are now put to rest in S. João do Campo.

This is the panorama of a rocky labyrinth, which once was a small community that is now dispersed throughout the world and places such as Campo, Paredes, Ponte de Lima, Mós and others, places that we in this distant Lisbon have not even ever heard of.

It is a live sneak peak, only until the end of the year, which is when the reservoir is once again filled with water and will submerge Vilarinho. It is, in fact, an opportunity not to be missed.

- * The Portuguese word *Alfeira* refers to livestock or cattle that has no calves or do not breed.

This article was originally published in the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, October 20 1979

Translation: Tobi Maier

THE CRITIC'S CHOICE: IRENE BUARQUE ERNESTO DE SOUSA

I

In order to better understand *who chooses whom*, and not only as a purely subjective move but rather as a categorical act and therefore with the rigor of justice and law – and strict but protective and affectionate rigor...

It would always be necessary to define, delimit and designate *who is who*.

Categorically ...

In this case: who is a critic, the critic; who is it that s/he chooses (the artist? the creator?); the artist, who is she, who is an artist? In order not to lose ourselves in less sacred, that is, more mundane, questions: who is it *who* chooses the critic. And so on, in this mirror play, in this void of reflexes and refluxes: nothing or God, depending on the community.

Of course, we will not topple over – here or elsewhere – the dizzying framework of definitions: the matter has been debated and discussed extensively during colloquiums, seminars, in books and bulletins, manifests, during round tables and other events along the first half of the century (especially during the interlude where the 20th century reflects the 19th century) – and where certainly tons of paper would be needed to describe an itinerary or a pilgrimage. (And it is important to note, that during this era of media and data processing, which some people have comically described as postmodern, tons of paper would be needed, which would mainly end up in trash. Postmodern trash.)

Let's look at the negative balance of the situation, which should not exist. Can a critic, if he wasn't an artist himself, judge and select an artist? Or asked the other way around: can an artist or creator work blindly; meaning: without explicit or implicit criticism about his/her work? Obviously not – that's beyond any disciplinary differences.

II

... apart from the differences of circumstances, taste or any coherence. And the coterie as well, because one thing is evident: tell me with whom you go out and I tell you who you are. It's not easy to break the tautological circle. The critic chooses the artist and the artist chooses the critic.

III

And finally the circumstances play an important role in this *Divine Comedy*. Who would Count Ugolino or Barbariccia from Dante's poem be today?

I appreciate the circumstances that led me to *choose* Irene Buarque and her Windows. I do in fact like the “window” context a lot, which at some point was the object of a passionate choice.

Taste varies, and is evidently subjective: but there are big and small loves. As for myself I prefer the big love. That one that moves the sun and the other stars. It is a question of taste: I don’t despise the daydream, nor the provincial wisdom.

An anthropological object of study, for the sovereign everything has grace. But for the sovereign (*for power*) the question, all questions, are more delicate, especially when it comes to coherence. When faced with a decision on what to select, the critic, the artist, the marketing manager, the undemanding amateur, they all choose themselves; and that is also an exercise of sovereignty. They cannot be contradictory, or they will deceive and fail. Only under mundane illusion one can come to the conclusion that power *can* be arbitrary. It cannot. The emperor was constituted in essence, and in the essence of the empire. Other than that: vassals and dwarves. The long, essentially millennial or endless, empirical heterology breaks down into a split second of mistaken tautology.

IV

I haven’t mentioned the means, and the way that leads to heaven. That’s where everything comes together – as long as one reaches Passion, the end or simply a path, who knows? In this case, and for example: the painting is contained in the photograph and the photograph in the painting. And one could still add that the order of the elements – of the means: of the instigators – is arbitrary.

What is the point of discussing the ways that lead to heaven? Angels, time, true amateurs and fellow travelers don’t err. And that is why the sovereign surrounds himself with all precautions, files, computer science, heavenly court, more or less clandestine agents – whatever, all tools matter. Because he cannot make a mistake; neither democracy nor tyranny tolerate the Emperor. All these means together some call the Divine Holy Spirit. Just to make sure you understand me. The name and title doesn’t matter.

V

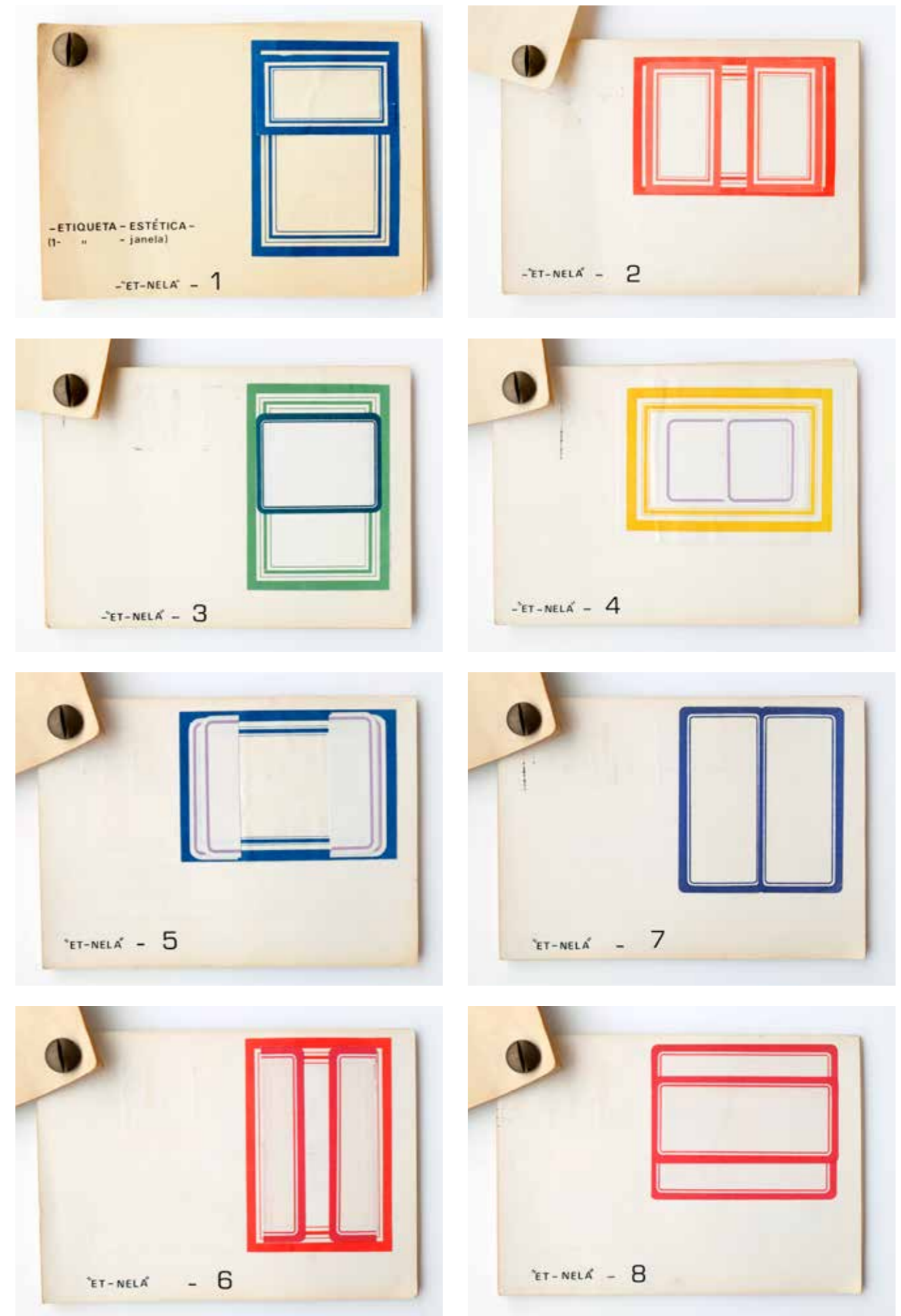
I have highlighted Passion, or more simply love. I could equally speak about Knowledge, Pleasure or Innocence. Also the name of Heaven is simply a pretext, or Pre-text. I shall end with a warning: if you want to visit the Sistine Chapel ceiling, then traveling to Rome, buying a ticket (here the Vatican is unforgiveable), and looking up to the roof is not enough. Much more effort is required. It is always more and more, more than twice the double.

... thus exhibitions and ex-hibitions are produced. Documents and art works: the creative act is a long and open process, a text where even true letters and their respective codes are exclusive inventions. And the text is the least: there is always a subtext ...

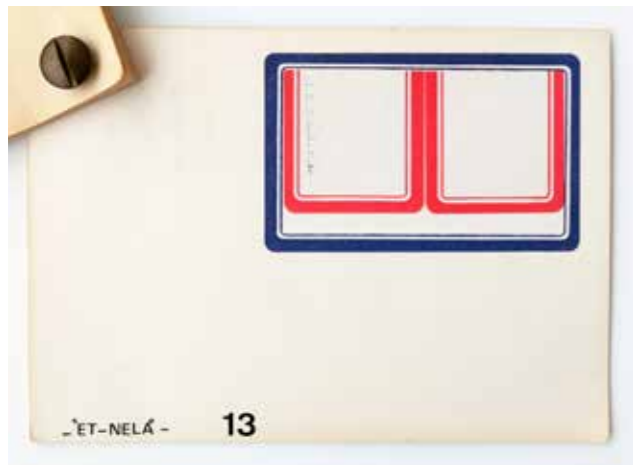
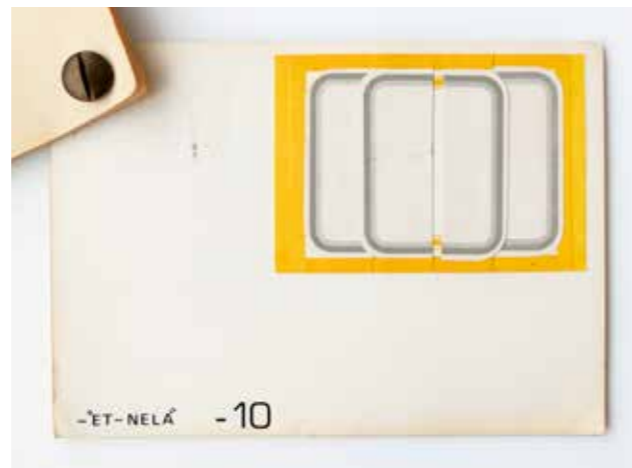
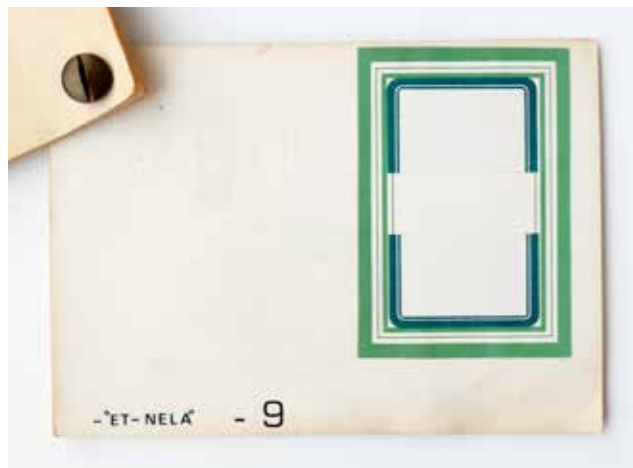
... to see through the windows of Irene Buarque it is not enough to look.

“A escola do crítico: Irene Buarque” was first published in an exhibition catalogue of the Centro Nacional de Cultura, 1981

Translation: Tobi Maier



Irene Buarque
Etiqueta - Estética, 19??



Irene Buarque
Etiqueta Poéticas, 1979



Irene Buarque
“...do discurso da janela - A janela como pintura...” 1-9, 1977

